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NEW AND NOVEL HOMES

WOMEN WRITING LONDON'S HOUSING, 1880-1918

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CONTENTS

Contents.....	2
List of Illustrations.....	4
Acknowledgements	5
Abstract.....	6
1. Domestic Architecture and Domestic Fiction.....	8
1.1 Writing Home(s)	16
1.2 London's Housing Fissure: 1880-1918.....	21
1.3 London's Housing Crisis	23
2. Structures of Authority: the Model Dwellings Movement.....	25
2.1 'And they call themselves Philanthropists!': the Model Dwellings Movement and Margaret Harkness's <i>A City Girl</i> (1887).....	27
2.2 'Who will Purify the Soil?': Slum Clearance and the Middle Classes in Julia Frankau's <i>A Babe in Bohemia</i> (1889)	41
2.3 'The Pyramid is Rotten at the Top': the Foundations of Commitment in <i>George Eastmont, Wanderer</i> (1905)	57
2.4 'Between Antique Perfection and Modern Character': Housing and Social Liberalism in Mary Ward's <i>Marcella</i> (1894).....	75
3. Chambers, Dwellings and Flats: Urban Housing for Working Women.....	110

3.1 'The Ideal Method of Living': Purpose-Built Housing for Single Working Women in Evelyn Sharp's <i>The Making of a Prig</i> (1897)	112
3.2 The Kailyard Comes to London: Ladies' Chambers and the Romance Narrative in Annie S. Swan's <i>A Victory Won</i> (1895)	132
3.3 Flat Ambition: Satire and Social Climbing in Julia Frankau's <i>The Heart of a Child</i> (1908).....	149
4. 'Thinking men' and Thinking Women: Sexuality, Christianity and Settlement Housing	175
4.1 'Philanthropy is the Fashion': the Politics of Economics in <i>Dear Faustina</i> (1897).....	179
4.2 'For Goodness' Sake, Don't become Philanthropic': Material Morality in L.T. Meade's <i>A Princess of the Gutter</i> (1895).....	207
5. Epilogue: Housing for a New Era: the Hampstead Garden Suburb and Mary Gabrielle Collins's <i>Garden Suburb Verses</i> (1913)	235
5.1 Conclusion.....	244
Bibliography	249

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1.	The Katharine Buildings, Cartwright Street (built 1884; photograph c. 1960).	31
2.	The Katharine Buildings, Rear Courtyard (built 1884; photograph c. 1960).	31
3.	George Cruikshank, 'The British Bee Hive', Etching (designed 1840 ; published 1867).	68
4.	Hampden House, Entrance, Buckinghamshire (1910).	83
5.	C.C. Brewer and A. Dunbar-Smith, Passmore Edwards Settlement, Plan and Front Elevation (1895).	91
6.	Peabody Buildings, Herbrand Street (built 1885; photograph date unknown).	93
7.	The Mary Ward Centre, Tavistock Place (built 1898; photograph 1990).	103
8.	Chenies Street Chambers, Bloomsbury (built 1888; photograph 2013).	120
9.	Dining Hall, Brabazon House, Pimlico (photograph c. 1902).	123
10.	Front Facade, Soho Club & Home for Working Girls (built 1884; photograph 2014).	154
11.	'Soho Club & Home for Working Girls', <i>The Story of Old Soho</i> (1893).	154
12.	Entrance Arch, Artillery Mansions, Westminster, Postcard (1907).	158
13.	M.H. Baillie Scott, Waterlow Court, Hampstead Garden Suburb (built 1909; photograph 1951).	233

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between women's writing and domestic architecture in London during the four decades around the turn of the twentieth century. It foregrounds novels written by women in order to investigate the ways in which this literature grapples with new forms of urban housing that emerged in order to accommodate economic, political and cultural changes in the city. This period of study is roughly framed by the Married Women's Property Act of 1882, legislation that allowed women to exist legally outside the family structure, and the end of WWI, which initiated a movement towards suburbanisation that was intended to alleviate the necessity of housing the city's labour forces locally. While scholarship to date has been attentive to the ways that women have been denied participation in the production of urban environments – through professional exclusion and social marginalisation – this thesis argues that their *creative* engagement with the city should be understood as an important contribution to its growth and development, imaginatively and materially. Central to this thesis is a consideration of the ways in which changing gender ideologies initiated new patterns for domestic architecture, but were also responses to the new social relationships that took shape as a result of their construction. It looks closely at women's literary engagement with domestic architecture in order to gain insight into the ways that the representative spaces of these texts interact with the city's built environment. In Chapter 1, I begin with an examination of the ways in which women's fiction engages with the political and legislative developments that initiated slum clearance and city improvement projects, and which led to the construction of model dwellings and early local authority housing. In Chapter 2, I trace the origins of purpose-built housing for women, or 'ladies' chambers', and consider its treatment in contemporaneous novels and journalism. In Chapter 3, I examine the ways in which the settlement movement challenged conventional notions of home and labour by studying its representation in two novels that construct these concerns within discussions of sexuality. I conclude this thesis with an investigation of the development of Hampstead Garden Suburb, and of the ways its design and representation sought to redress the social and political uncertainties that emerged in late nineteenth-century London and its literature.

1

DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE AND DOMESTIC FICTION

At the end of the nineteenth century legislators, philanthropists and authors all turned their attention to reconceptualising how people lived together in London. Enthusiasm for this task spanned London's geographical boundaries, from Canning Town to Kensington, and from the open spaces of Hampstead Heath to those of Peckham Rye. This reconceptualisation also stretched across class barriers: workers' hostels offered affordable shelter for itinerant labourers; model dwellings companies provided improved housing for the working classes and workers' cottages for the upwardly mobile artisan classes; suburban expansion made available low-density neighbourhoods and individual gardens to the burgeoning middle classes; and in the city, apartment buildings provided accommodation for a metropolitan demographic diverse enough to include thespians and parliamentarians. The impulse for this task was provoked by a number of related factors, three of which are considered in depth in this thesis: overcrowding in poor areas; women's entry into the labour market; and the emergence of political and religious projects designed to remodel the city's social order. These social and political changes altered the conception, design and construction of the home. As the material form of the household changed, so did the literary mode that most closely engaged with its operations: the novel.

This thesis examines the relationship between literary representation and urban domestic architecture in London between 1880 and 1918. It is concerned with mapping the rhetorical shifts in women's fiction onto the reimagining of household practice and the physical reconceptualisation of domestic space during this period. It treats architectural and literary forms as texts that require exegesis, the rendition of which reveals the interconnectedness of materialities and ideologies. Its project is therefore a materialist one that has at its centre a concern with investigating cultural practices and the representation of social power. It is equally a feminist project: first, in its treatment of women's fiction as a field of critical enquiry, but more importantly in its dedication to interrogating the ways that gender is produced as a social category. This thesis examines a significant historical moment: one in which there existed a comprehensive effort to design domestic

buildings that diverged from the conventional household model, which based its spatial organisation on the nuclear family unit. As Caroline Morrell explains, the Census Report of 1871 stated that 'the natural family is founded by marriage, and consists, in its complete state of husband, wife and children'.¹ Yet during the late nineteenth century, public interest and critical opinion were attentive to the growing diversification of domestic relationships in urban centres. This thesis foregrounds three models of housing that emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century that addressed this diversification: model dwellings, women's housing and settlement housing. These three models of new domestic architecture responded to three key social and political changes: model dwellings were a response to overcrowding in poor areas; women's housing (or ladies' chambers, as the middle-class equivalent of this form of housing was known) addressed the flood of women into London's labour market; and settlement housing provided residential accommodation for those people who engaged with projects designed to remodel the city's social order.² While these material changes altered the design and construction of the home, they also effected social and political changes. The relationship between materialities and ideologies is not teleological or unidirectional, but mutually effective. I draw my understanding of this process from the work of Daphne Spain who in *Gendered Spaces* (1992) refers to the 'mutual reinforcement of [spatial] processes', and Doreen Massey who proposes that space and social relations are 'mutually constitutive'; that, to quote Massey, material space 'effects and has effects back' on the construction of social and political ideologies.³ Both Spain and Massey have found this materialist approach productive when considering gender and sexuality. While the built environment – a phrase which I understand to include all non-organically produced social and cultural spaces – represents and

1 Qtd. in Caroline Morrell, 'Housing and the Women's Movement 1860-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford Brookes University, 1999), p. 31-32. This definition, as Morrell acknowledges, is narrow as it 'excludes members of the extended family or other people not related by blood or marriage, it also overlooks the changing and differing nature of "family" relationships'. Nevertheless, this narrow definition became a mean against which alternative models were measured and judged. For a more thorough discussion of the relationship between dominant concepts of family, home and household during this period see Morrell, pp. 26-45.

2 This thesis follows conventional usage in referring to London's square mile as 'the City', but the urban area beyond the confines of this district as 'the city'.

3 Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 79; Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 225.

reinforces status differences based on gender and sexuality, domestic architecture is especially generative when considering the dynamic shift in conventional gender ideologies that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. Housing is, as the work of Alice T. Friedman and Annmarie Adams demonstrates, a highly-charged site of personal identity, and one which articulates the dynamics of intimate relationships.⁴ Housing necessarily engages with the normative values of social and political thought; this is not to say, however, that it must always capitulate to them.

This thesis takes, in part, its cue from John Ruskin's suggestion that '[a]ll architecture proposes an effect on the human mind, not merely a service to the human frame' to ask what effect these new models of urban housing had on the subjectivities of inhabitants of late nineteenth-century London.⁵ It does so by engaging with the ways buildings are represented in women's fiction, but also with the ways that their representation shifted consciousness and social practice. Rather than treat the built environment as a backdrop to shifting identities and changing practices, I explore the ways that housing and its representation engages with their very formation. This thesis also responds to Rita Felski's critical provocation that 'feminist critics need to take seriously past women's and men's own understandings of their positioning within historical and social processes'.⁶ My analysis foregrounds women's fiction not with the ambition of defining a genre, but instead to delineate new processes by which we can understand women to be active in the imaginative and material construction of the city. The development of feminist criticism during the last twenty years of the twentieth century enabled scholarship across many disciplines to become attentive to the ways in which women have been denied participation in the production of urban environments, both through professional exclusion and social marginalisation.⁷ Building on work by cultural historians

4 Alice T. Friedman, *Women and the Making of the Modern House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); AnnMarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses and Women 1870-1900* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998).

5 John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (Orpington: George Allen, 1889; With Preface from the Edition of 1880), p. 8.

6 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 8.

7 See for example Matrix Feminist Design Cooperative, *Making Space: Women and the Manmade Environment* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), which was one of the earliest interventions into the ways that cities are gendered. More recently, Elizabeth Grosz has explored the ways that cities produce gendered and sexualised bodies in essays such as 'Bodies – Cities' in the anthology *Sexuality and Space*, ed. by Beatriz Colomina (New York: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 241-254. Subsequently two other anthologies brought together scholars across disciplines to

such as Elizabeth Wilson, who suggests that during the nineteenth century 'women's very presence in cities [was] a problem' as their existence outside the home 'overturned a symbolic natural order', architectural historians such as Sarah Deutsch and Jessica Ellen Sewell have demonstrated more recently the ways in which women, in Sewell's words, 'negotiat[ed] the gaps between the urban landscape as it was built and as it was imagined to be'.⁸ At the same time, women's representation of and presence in the city has drawn attention from cultural historians such as Judith Walkowitz and literary scholars such as Deborah Epstein Nord whose *Walking the Victorian Streets* (1995) marked the advent of a spate of publications concerning the intricate relationship between gender, urban space and literary representation that has endured through the twenty plus years since its publication.⁹ In this thesis, I build upon the important groundwork laid by such studies, particularly in my concern as to the ways that cultural narratives shape and discursively produce women's understandings of their lives and relationships in urban centres. The present work offers a departure from and complication of this model in its concentration on different architectural forms of domestic space, and the ways that representations of these spaces produce new experiences and identities.

This thesis makes use of specific terminology in order to define the parameters of its argument: domestic space, ideology, identity and experience. New architectural forms of domestic space, or what I sometimes describe as new urban housing, refers to purpose-built models of housing that are different in their physical properties and dimensions to conventional models of

address the complexities of gendered identity in urban and non-urban spaces. See *Architecture and Feminism*, ed. by Deborah Coleman, Elizabeth Danze and Carol Henderson (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) and *Gender Space Architecture*, ed. by Iain Bordain, Barbara Penner and Jane Rendell (London: Routledge, 2000).

8 Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women* (London: Virago, 1991), p. 5; p. 33; and Jessica Ellen Sewell, *Women and the Everyday City: Public Space in San Francisco, 1880-1915* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xiii. See also Sarah Deutsch, *Women and the City: Gender, Power and Space in Boston, 1870-1940* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

9 Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victoria Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995). Other studies that consider related themes, but build upon this work include Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Emma Liggins, *George Gissing, the Working Woman, and British Culture* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006); Wendy Parkins, *Mobility and Modernity in Women's Novels: Women Moving Dangerously* (London: Palgrave, 2009).

housing. Whether country house or cottage, city terrace or back-to-back, conventional models of housing were designed for the nuclear family unit (although larger houses may have accommodated extended families or servants). The models of housing examined in this thesis were designed as alternatives to conventional housing, and for this reason differ structurally and spatially. Model dwellings, while designed to accommodate some families, also included communal facilities and were structured as aggregate domestic space. The nature of poverty meant that a single-room dwelling might accommodate an extended family, or a two-room flat might be shared by several independent lodgers. This was in part made possible by the flexible space provided by many of these model dwellings. Women's housing accommodated single women and was therefore a residential model designed along the lines of gender segregation. Settlement housing was also often gender segregated, and as a model of communal housing drew influence from monastic and collegiate residential design. Each model of housing examined is, therefore, representative of a new structural model of domestic space. Consequently, I consider women's housing but I do not consider women's lodging houses or boarding houses, which were established in conventional homes that were sometimes adapted to this purpose.¹⁰

Although depictions of women living together in lodging houses or boarding houses during this period proliferate, this project is concerned with the comprehensive redesign of domestic space and the ways that these new domestic forms are experienced, reimagined and represented in fiction.¹¹ This process of analysis, which seeks to identify discontinuities between the ways that space is imagined and experienced, has been shaped by the work of the cultural theorist Henri Lefebvre. Like other scholars interested in urban space and the dynamics of social power, my analysis has been influenced by Lefebvre's distinction between space as it is conceived of by authorities, as it is experienced in practice, and as it is represented (or to use Lefebvre's word,

10 For a consideration of the boarding house in women's fiction see Terri Anne Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queens College, University of Oxford, 2012).

11 See for instance Ethel F. Heddle, *Three Girls in a Flat* (London: Gardner, Darton & Co., 1896); Mrs. George de Horne [Jessie] Vaizey, *A Houseful of Girls* (London: Religious Tract Society, c.1905); Mrs. W. K. Clifford, *A House in Marylebone* (London: Duckworth & Co., 1917).

imagined).¹² These layers of space are, as Lefebvre suggests, dynamic and dialogic. It is part of the project of this thesis to make use of these distinctions in order to identify either ruptures or continuities between these layers of space, and to consider how these instances might change our understanding about women's engagement with domestic space at the end of the nineteenth century. This guiding principle is the extent of my specific engagement with Lefebvre's work for the reason that it is often too vague to be productive, particularly where questions of gender are concerned. The work of feminist architectural historians such as Daphne Spain, Dolores Hayden, Jane Rendell and Barbara Penner, who have each in their own work developed Lefebvre's principles of socially produced space, has proved more productive in the context of the present argument.¹³

This thesis takes as its material for analysis the architectural and spatial properties of these new domestic structures as they are represented in literature, but it does not concern itself with the culture of domestic materialism. In recent years, a number of important historical and literary texts have emerged on the subject of the nineteenth-century domestic interior that take stock of the ways gender influences the material culture of everyday life. In *Material Relations* (2011) Jane Hamlett builds upon work by Stefan Muthesius to examine the ways that the material culture of the nineteenth-century domestic interior reveals important information about public and private relationships between family members of the middle classes.¹⁴ Hamlett's interdisciplinary approach

12 Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974). Studies in literature that have made productive use of Lefebvre's spatial trilogy in recent years include Andrew Thacker, *Moving through Modernity: Space and Geography in Modernism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003) and Haewon Hwang, *London's Underground Spaces: Representing the Victorian City, 1850-1915* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).

13 Spain, *Gendered Spaces*; Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: History of Designs for American Homes, Neighbourhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982); Dolores Hayden, *Redesigning the American Dream: the Future of Housing, Work and Family Life* (New York: Norton, 1984; Republished 2002); Jane Rendell, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Gender, Space and Architecture in Regency London* (London: Athlone, 2002); Barbara Penner, *Newlyweds on Tour: Honeymooning in Nineteenth-Century America* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 2009).

14 Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011). Also relevant is Hamlett's work on gender and material culture at university residences; see Jane Hamlett, "'Nicely Feminine, Yet Learned': Student Rooms at Royal Holloway and the Oxford and Cambridge Colleges in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Women's History Review*, 15.1 (2006), 137-161. See also Stefan Muthesius, *The Poetic Home: Designing the Nineteenth-Century Interior* (London and New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009). Additional work on the nineteenth-century domestic interior includes the collection *Domestic Space: Reading the Nineteenth-Century Interior*, ed. by Inga Bryden and Janet Floyd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009).

– she draws on novels, magazines, manuals and journals – informs my own approach to material culture, and her work is especially valuable for its interpretation of the way domestic space helps to negotiate relationships. More recently, scholars have shifted their attention from the middle-class domestic interior to consider the spatial processes and material culture of the working-class home; for instance, Vicky Holmes has examined the dynamics of working-class households and has given particular attention to the historical figure of the lodger, while Emily Cuming has produced compelling work on the nineteenth-century slum interior that argues for its aesthetic position as 'strange and meaningful counterpart' to the bourgeois interior, rather than simply the negation of bourgeois culture.¹⁵ This work on the material culture of domestic interiors has influenced my own understanding of the ways that materiality forges identities, particularly as they are related to gender and class. While there is room for further consideration of the relationship between gender and materiality in working-class households, this thesis deliberately sets aside matters of the domestic interior and questions of consumerism. Instead, this project is concerned with specific changes in the design of architectural structures and the way these architectural shifts are represented in literature.

In this thesis, I use the term ideology or ideologies to refer to normative paradigms of thought. While my understanding of what exactly constitutes ideology has been shaped most formatively by Louis Althusser's materialist philosophies of this concept, part of the project of this thesis is to interrogate its meaning and how it is produced.¹⁶ It is my understanding that ideology is a component of an individual's broader psychic structure, a general term I use to refer to processes of thought. An individual's psychic structure is shaped by many diverse components and is therefore not a unified structural system. Michel Foucault has addressed the ways in which another

15 Vicky Holmes, 'Accommodating the Lodger: The Domestic Arrangements of Lodgers in Working-Class Dwellings in a Victorian Provincial Town', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 19.3 (2014), 314-331; Emily Cuming, "'Home is Home be it Never so Homely": Reading mid-Victorian Slum Interiors', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18.3 (2013), 368-386 (p. 369).

16 Louis Althusser, 'Idéologie et Appareils Idéologiques d'État', *Positions: 1964-1975* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970), pp. 67-125. For an English translation see Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-188.

component of psychic structure, identity, is the effect of cultural discourses, practices, and 'numerous systems that intersect and compete'.¹⁷ My understanding of identity has been influenced by Foucault's genealogical interpretation of the process of identity formation. Genealogies, a term borrowed from Friedrich Nietzsche, emphasises not instances of origin but processes of development. An investigation and critique of the processes of identity formation sit alongside this project's preoccupation with the production of categories of social power. This thesis unpicks the ways that the formation of identity and ideology is in part governed by experience. In describing an individual's experience, I refer to what architectural theorists define as spatial practice: a person's physical conduct in space.

Writing Home(s)

The historical reevaluation of women's contribution to the construction of city spaces, given its fillip by the emergence of Second Wave Feminism, has been an important project of the last sixty years. It is now recognised that women were instrumental in professional positions that effected the design and management of cities and housing; women who were dismissed as amateurs, and their activities which were derided as commonplace, have made their way to the forefront of debate about the production of urban space. The most important collection to bring together the multifarious ways that women contributed to the production of the built environment is Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth's *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870–1950* (2007). It is a study that has been formative for my own understanding of women's historical role as contributors to the urban environment. Yet the present project, which engages with historical materialism, takes (first and foremost) literature for the subject of its analysis: it is concerned with representations of domestic architecture in women's fiction. In *Architecture and the Modernism of*

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', *Language, Counter Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell, 1977), pp. 139-164 (p. 161).

Private Life (2008), Victoria Rosner makes a number of important observations about the ways in which literary texts articulate the values and social hierarchies encoded in the domestic spaces in which they take place.¹⁸ I agree with Rosner's evaluation of the role that literature plays in 'imagining a [...] reorganization of private life to accord with changing social customs', but my interpretation of how and when this reorganisation takes place differs significantly.¹⁹ Rosner argues that during the Modernist period private life became dominated by disorder, which was a response to the altogether too orderly systems of the Victorian home. She suggests that 'the peace and stability of the Victorian household deteriorated, deformed by the pressure of changing social, sexual, and cultural mores. What took its place was a far more provisional, more embodied, more unstructured kind of private life – the kind of life we still call “modern”'.²⁰ This thesis argues that the particular 'metamorphosis' Rosner describes was in place by the middle of the nineteenth century and was carried through to the period that is defined in her study as 'modern'.²¹ Yet I do not wish to claim that the rethinking of domestic space to which my analysis attends was only a nineteenth-century phenomenon: although I am invested in demonstrating that the historical period in question was productive of specific architectural changes and ideological shifts, I am equally committed to suggesting a methodology by which other historical periods and their artefacts, both architectural and literary, can be reevaluated and reinterpreted. Oddly, for a study that purports to examine architecture, Rosner suggests that '[i]t was interior design – and not architecture – that articulated a visual and spatial vocabulary describing the changing nature of private life'.²² This thesis argues that at least in the second half of the nineteenth century, the changing nature of domestic life is legible in the design and representation of architecture.

18 Victoria Rosner, *Architecture and the Modernism of Private Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 1-2.

19 Rosner, p. 2.

20 Rosner, p. 3.

21 Ibid. Rosner acknowledges that a discomfort with conventional notions of home is evident in much New Woman fiction of the 1880s and 1890s, but her examples (Thomas Hardy's *A Laodicean* (1881), George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), and Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895)) focus on reactions to the family unit without considering what forms – both architectural and social – were already beginning to take its place.

22 Rosner, p. 9.

The predominance of the novels examined in this thesis fall into the category of popular fiction, but I hesitate to define this corpus more closely. While certain novels by Julia Frankau, L.T. Meade and Margaret Harkness share certain generic conventions with slum fiction, all three authors move beyond the thematic and geographical parameters of the slum in the novels studied in this thesis and in their writing more generally. The ten women's novels that are examined in depth in this thesis are situated within a broader framework of contemporaneous fiction, some of which is canonical, and much of which is written by male authors. This is not an attempt to compare the experiences of men and women, nor to frame women's writing at the end of the nineteenth century as a stable or uniform category, but to examine the ways women's writing makes use of domestic architecture to articulate shifts in gender behaviour and identity.

The new architectural forms examined in this thesis have received limited attention in historical or architectural scholarship; and there is no study that considers these new models of housing in view either of their implication in the formation of gender identities or their representation in literature. A developing interest in nineteenth-century socialist history and labour politics during the post-war period through the sixties resulted in several studies of working-class housing, such as John Nelson Tarn's *Working-Class Housing in 19th-Century Britain* (1971) and *Five Per Cent Philanthropy* (1974), by the mid-seventies. Tarn's work remains unrivalled in its attention to architectural detail and analysis of the social and political conditions that gave rise to these new forms of housing.²³ There have been equally few studies of the settlement movement and its housing; Deborah Weiner's groundbreaking *Architecture and Social Reform in Late Victorian Britain* (1994) makes important observations about the architecture of both Toynbee Hall and the

23 The most crucial text here is undoubtedly E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1963; Republished 2013). Another notable study that built on Thompson's work is Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971). This interest also inspired research on urban poverty and the slum. See, for instance, Anthony S. Wohl, *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977). This concern was also visible in literary studies, albeit slightly later. See Stephen Ingle, *Socialist Thought in Imaginative Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1979) and *The Rise of Socialist Fiction*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987). John Nelson Tarn, *Working-Class Housing in 19th-Century Britain* (London: Architectural Association Papers, 1971) and John Nelson Tarn, *Five Per Cent Philanthropy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

Passmore Edwards Settlement, but there has been no attempt by scholars since its publication over twenty years ago to delve deeper into the important material Weiner unearths.²⁴ The form of housing that has without question received the least attention is ladies' chambers, which merit only a few pages of attention in Martha Vicinus's *Independent Women* (1985) and certainly less in any subsequent consideration.²⁵ There is at present no study that examines these new forms of housing as an architectural sequence, rather than as discrete experiments without any continuity across the city's perceived geographic and economic boundaries.

The novels that form the material of the close analysis in this thesis are as uncharted as the buildings they represent, and most were unknown to me at the outset of this project. It was first in reading Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* (1887) that I was made aware of model dwellings as an architectural intervention into London's built environment and a challenge to middle-class understandings of home. This was followed by an interest in identifying other experiments in domestic architecture during the period, which were more numerous than anticipated. The period identified by this thesis – from 1880 to 1918 – is one in which efforts were made on all sides to accommodate the city's growing population; experimentation in architectural efficiency was therefore necessary. By the conclusion of WWI middle-class suburbs such as Bedford Park and Hampstead Garden Suburb, which had their roots in the early Edwardian period, were complemented by the growth of suburbs for the upwardly mobile working classes. The development of these suburbs, it was claimed, would enable everyone to have a family home. At the conclusion of the nineteenth century the centrality of the middle-class family home was challenged by new domestic spaces that, although atypical, were conspicuous on account of their novelty and

24 Deborah Weiner, *Architecture and Social Reform in Late-Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). There have been two notable studies dedicated exclusively to the history of the settlement movement in the United Kingdom to date: Katherine Bentley Beaman, *Women and the Settlement Movement* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996) and Nigel Scotland, *Squires in the Slums: Settlements and Missions in Late-Victorian London* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007). Lucinda Matthews Jones is currently preparing a monograph titled *Settling: Domesticity, Class and Urban philanthropy in the British University Settlement Movement*.

25 Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985). Ladies' chambers receive comparatively brief treatment in Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) and Emma Liggins, 'Having a Good Time? The Bachelor Girl in 1890s New Woman Fiction', *Writing Women of the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Adrienne E. Gavin and Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 98-110.

influential owing to their presence in the most populous areas of London. As a result, these new domestic spaces appear with relative frequency in the period's literature.

The priority given to novels in this thesis necessarily means that crucial figures in the history of London's housing, such as Octavia Hill and Beatrice Webb, are treated as ancillary. Yet these individuals loom on the margins of this study to inform my evaluation of the ways that philanthropic and political discourses shaped the design and construction of housing. In its concentration on fiction, this thesis aims to bring into focus the ways that imaginative writing participates in the discursive process of producing ideologies and materialities of home. Matthew Taunton refers to the creative experiments of writers as 'fictions of the city', narratives that 'frequently contain projections about the ways in which that city could be improved or perfected, or go to wrack. In this regard novels [...] about urban life form a continuum with treatises on urban planning, architectural manifestoes and social reform tracts'.²⁶ This continuum of discourse on urban practices that Taunton describes is particularly apposite in an examination of the late nineteenth century, as it is only in the last twenty years of the century that the professions we now associate with the material production of urban space – architects and urban planners – were becoming increasingly regulated by professional bodies and, consequently, defined as the professions we understand them to be today. In this thesis I offer a similar method of analysis in my understanding of fiction as a form of culture that participates in the discursive construction of urban domestic architecture. I do however aim to take this one step further, and connect discursive practice to material practice. I draw on Jane Rendell's recent work on site-writing to ask not how we write *about* housing – but how we write housing, and in so doing perform important critical and political interventions into urban space.²⁷ This thesis, then, is an investigation into the ways that nineteenth-century novels build houses.

26 Matthew Taunton, *Fictions of the City: Class, Culture and Mass Housing in London and Paris* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 1.

27 Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

London's Housing Fissure: 1880-1918

This thesis argues that the decades around the turn of the twentieth century were significant on account of a widespread attempt to accommodate the city's growing population within its geographical boundaries. It investigates the ways that urban housing is represented in the literature of this period. While my examination is grounded in the relationship between text and context, it is not a historical study. Instead, it is a discursive analysis that unpicks the ways that cultural context is related to language and language use. This thesis argues for a process of mutual causality between discursive representation and historical actuality. The emergence of slum fiction and investigative journalism in the latter half of the century – hot on the heels of the Condition of England novel that reached its peak at mid-century – *represents* domestic crisis in the depiction of insanitary homes and the condition of abject poverty, but also *causes* a crisis of representation. By this I mean that the literature of this period represents the experience of urban housing, but is simultaneously preoccupied with the extent to which representation can capture lived experience. With the novel this is further complicated by the necessity of grappling with the dislocations that emerge from the novel as a predominantly middle-class domestic genre, but one that attempts to represent architectural forms that diverge from the image and experience of conventional middle-class domesticity. This is apparent, I argue, not only in the representation of urban slums or working-class housing – but in all other representations of housing that depart from the conventional family home. Many of the novels examined in this thesis encounter difficulties in the attempt to represent unfamiliar housing and unconventional domestic relationships. Although the representation of these new spaces and social relations is varied in its treatment across these novels, what is common to all texts – albeit in different ways – are perceptible gaps or fissures that emerge in these texts. In some instances, such as Julia Frankau's *A Babe in Bohemia* (1889) or L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895) these fissures emerge in the representation of characters and their relationships; in others, such as Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* (1887) or Evelyn Sharp's *The*

Making of a Prig (1897), it is evident in the narrative trajectory; and in novels like Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* (1897) these fissures materialise in the very language of the novel itself. There are many novels, such as Margaret Harkness's *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (1905), in which a number of textual fissures are evident in form and in content; there are others, such as Annie S. Swan's *A Victory Won* (1895), which more comfortably align with the generic conventions of the nineteenth-century novel. This thesis elucidates these textual fissures and explores the ways in which they coincide with a historical period that manifests new architectural forms that challenge the paradigm of the middle-class family home. If women are *themselves* products of domestic ideology as represented in fiction, as Nancy Armstrong suggests, this project makes a related claim: that the lacunae in these domestic novels signify social and textual spaces for the emergence of new identities and paradigms of thought.²⁸ The novels examined in this thesis engage with new experiences and architectural forms, and in so doing open up novelistic space in which new possibilities for representation emerge.

This thesis falls into a series of projects: first, to examine the ways that the literary representation of new urban housing reveals fissures or inconsistencies between the form and subject of the late nineteenth-century novel; second, to interpret the process by which the articulation of these fissures and inconsistencies produce new psychic structures that, in turn, effect the material environment; third, to suggest how these inconsistencies and fissures between form and content allow space for the emergence of new definitions of home and identity. In Chapter 2, I explore the ways Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* and Julia Frankau's *A Babe in Bohemia* foreground the legal and political developments that initiated London's slum clearance and city improvement projects; I then turn my attention to Harkness's *George Eastmont, Wanderer* and Mary Ward's *Marcella* in order to investigate the emergence of the model dwellings movement and the development of early local authority housing. In Chapter 3, I trace the establishment of ladies'

²⁸ Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 3-5.

chambers and women's dwellings, and explore the ways Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of a Prig*, Annie S. Swan's *A Victory Won* and Frankau's *The Heart of a Child* each differently articulate the incongruities between the domestic expectations of conventional femininity and the experiences of the women who lived in these buildings. In Chapter 4, I examine the development of some of the first large-scale cooperative housing in London, which was produced for the Settlement Movement, and which aimed to bridge not only the economic gap but also the geographical distance between rich and poor. This chapter engages with Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* and L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* in order to examine the ways in which domestic space reveals the intimate relationship between economics and sexuality, and indicates the ways that changes in this space could produce new models for intimate relationships. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the development of Henrietta Barnett's Hampstead Garden Suburb and gives particular attention to Waterlow Court (1909), a building designed by M.H. Baillie Scott for single working women. I examine the ways in which Mary Gabrielle Collins's *Garden Suburb Verses* alleviates the social and political crises unearthed by nineteenth-century urban fiction by redrawing the relationship between literature and conventional domesticity within suburban parameters.

London's Housing Crisis

Today, it is clear that we have not solved the nineteenth century's housing crisis nor have we moved beyond the concerns of its authors and activists. As David Kroll eloquently put it at a recent conference, 'Mobilising London's Housing Histories', 'the current crisis has already taught us we are not above repeating failures of previous generations and could probably learn from their successes'.²⁹ There are similarities in the discourse of public debate between the nineteenth-century housing crisis and our own today: over-crowding, immigration, rack-renting and social housing are

²⁹ David Kroll, Introduction given at 'Mobilising London's Housing Histories: the Provision of Homes Since 1850', Centre for Metropolitan History, Institute of Historical Research, 27-28 June, 2013.

all subjects given varying degrees of attention in the press and in parliament. Most often this discourse constructs housing as, in principle, a commodity, whether through television programmes such as the BBC's 'To Buy or Not to Buy' and Channel 4's 'Location, Location, Location', or in the context of the present government's institution of the 'help-to-buy' programme – a partial retronym of and intentional allusion to the controversial right-to-buy scheme introduced in the 1980s – which presupposes that wide-spread home ownership engenders a more equitable society. An investigation of housing's treatment in nineteenth-century popular discourse during a period of financial crisis is also significant at a moment when the value of historicism is being debated and revalued in the disciplines of English Literature and Cultural Studies.³⁰ As Martin Hewitt has recently suggested, historicist studies do not merely attribute textual interpretation to context but instead treat history as a canvas that requires a 'three-dimensional approach' to a text; that is, meaning and interpretation extends beyond its own formal structures. Equally important, Hewitt suggests, is that these narratives provide 'resources for action' both at the moment of their creation and the instances of their deployment.³¹ This thesis does not aim to use a historical narrative of London's housing crisis in order to reinforce an understanding of the present. It does however wish to provoke the reader's attention toward the consonances and dissonances between the nineteenth-century housing crisis and our own today – a subject to which I return at the conclusion of this thesis. The novels examined in this thesis, active in their own engagement with contemporary attempts to grapple with London's housing crisis, remain relevant today and offer to readers new resources in their presentation of an alternative discourse to that which focuses on housing as commodity. In so doing, each novel offers a new foundation and impetus for historical and present-day debate.

30 For a consideration of financial crises across Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Michael Bordo and Christopher Meissner, 'Financial Crises, 1880-1913: The Role of Foreign Currency Debt', *National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper*, 11173 (2015), 1-68.

31 Martin Hewitt, 'The Poverty of Anti-Historicism', Paper given at BAVS Talks 2015, Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities (TORCH), 12 May 2015.

2

STRUCTURES OF AUTHORITY: THE MODEL DWELLINGS MOVEMENT

The last two decades of the nineteenth century were the first to produce effective legislation on housing reform in Britain. While a number of councils developed important changes to policy from mid-century, some of which were later nationalised, these developments lacked coherence and focused on negative rather than positive provision: slum clearance rather than the construction of new housing.¹ It was not until these legislative changes were buttressed by political and intellectual critiques of *laissez-faire* capitalism that housing was fused to the wider condition of poverty and changes to the built environment occurred alongside changes to ideology.² Increasing government intervention designed to address the housing problem, whether at a local or national level, impinged equally upon the lives of rich and poor. In recent years, scholars have debated the relative successes and motivations of slum clearance and urban redevelopment and in so doing have produced important research on working-class housing.³ While scholarship has been attentive to the ways in which material changes to working-class housing were often motivated by middle-class concerns about the urban environment – whether expressed through philanthropic effort or government initiative – it is also necessary to consider such changes within the context of broader ideological and legislative movements that influenced middle-class housing.

In this chapter, I consider changes to the built environment made by developments in housing policy and the ways these changes are treated in contemporaneous women's fiction. I first examine the evolution of government intervention by focusing on Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* (1887). The novel foregrounds the model dwellings movement, which combined mid-century notions of philanthropy and capitalist enterprise with government assistance. I next examine Julia Frankau's *A Babe in Bohemia* (1889), which satirises contemporary slum literature and casts doubt on state

1 While legislative changes such as the Torrens (Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Act of 1868) and the Cross Acts (Artisans and Labourers Dwelling Improvement Act of 1875) were important in calling national attention to housing policy, it was not until a series of amendments to both acts were made that a coherent urban renewal policy was put in place. For a detailed analysis of changes in housing legislation between 1850-1880, see Anthony S. Wohl, 'The Weight of the Law' in *The Eternal Slum: Housing and Social Policy in Victorian London* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), pp. 73-108. See also Paul Balchin and Maureen Rhoden, *Housing: the Essential Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 3-5.

2 Richard Rodger, *Housing in Urban Britain 1780-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 48.

3 See Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets: the Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (London: Vintage, 2009); Jerry White, *London in the 19th Century: A 'Human Awful Wonder of God'* (London: Vintage, 2008); and Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004).

paternalism's capacity for meaningful reform. The third section interrogates the relationship between religious paternalism, socialism, and civic paternalism in Harkness's later novel *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (1905). Finally, I consider the ways the representation of housing expresses a model for gradual political and social change in Mary Ward's *Marcella* (1894). While interpreting various ideologies and espousing different opinions, each novel responds to changes in public regulation and expresses concerns about women's status in the context of these changes.

'And they call themselves philanthropists!': The Model Dwellings Movement and Margaret
Harkness's *A City Girl* (1887)

The most significant changes in housing legislation at mid-century initiated the model dwellings movement. While in London the Metropolitan Board of Works (created in 1856) had the power to condemn and demolish unsanitary dwellings, there was little provision for those who were evicted until the Labouring Classes Dwelling Houses Act (1866 and 1867). The act allowed model dwellings companies to borrow money from the government's Public Works Loan Commissioners below market rate in order to finance the purchase of clearance sites and the construction of working-class housing. Although rates differed between companies, of which in London there were approximately 30 operating in the latter half of the nineteenth century, most companies provided investors with an annual dividend of five per cent and thus their business model earned the sobriquet 'five per cent philanthropy'. Although model dwellings companies represent private investment, historians agree that the experiment would have been impossible without government assistance.⁴ In combining capitalist enterprise with philanthropy, these companies were ideologically pitched between self-help and civic paternalism. Given that the model dwellings initiative represents the first movement toward state provision of housing, which would eventually become a priority of the London County Council (LCC) in 1889, it is perhaps surprising these

4 Wohl, p. 144. See also Paul Balchin and Maureen Rhoden, pp. 3-4.

efforts were so criticised by Margaret Harkness in *A City Girl* (1887). For Harkness, who was in her early life a committed socialist, the model dwellings movement was not only an inadequate response to the social inequity created by capitalism, but it was also dangerous in its motivations. In *A City Girl*, Harkness connects the misguided paternalism of the model dwellings movement with the familiar narrative of the fallen woman – which, as Sally Ledger notes, Harkness partly rewrites.⁵ The novel follows the story of the young, working-class protagonist Nelly Ambrose, whose respectability and middle-class ambition do not lead to an improvement in social position; she is, instead, seduced by a middle-class self-styled radical dandy who rather than abandon her simply seems to forget her altogether. When her child – a consequence of the affair – dies in hospital soon after its birth, Nelly is left with little choice other than to marry the caretaker of the model dwellings in which she lives. *A City Girl* imaginatively interrogates the relationship between social and physical coercion both in the built environment and in personal relationships.

Upon the completion of *A City Girl* in 1887, Harkness sent a copy of the novel to Friedrich Engels and received what is now the well-known letter in which he challenges her representation of the working classes. Although he claims to have read the book 'with great pleasure and avidity' he claims that Harkness represents the working class as 'a passive mass, unable to help itself' and that '[a]ll attempts to drag it out of its torpid misery come from without, from above'.⁶ The criticism is not unwarranted; the novel does not present the working classes as politically engaged, let alone efficacious. In the preface to the second edition of *The Housing Question*, Engels criticises the 'petty utopias' proposed by 'bourgeoise-socialist philanthropists' that only sought to yoke the working classes to capitalist interest through private property.⁷ Although *A City Girl* stops short of representing the 'revolutionary hotbed' Engels believed inevitable in working-class neighbourhoods, it does offer a potent criticism of private property. More specifically, the novel characterises the

5 Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 49.

6 Friedrich Engels, 'Letter to Margaret Harkness, Beginning of April 1888 (draft)', in *Marx & Engels on Literature and Art*, ed. by Lee Baxandall and Stefan Morawski (New York, NY: International General, 1974), pp. 115-117 (p. 115).

7 Frederick [Friedrich] Engels, *The Housing Question* (London: Martin Lawrence, n.d.), pp. 17-18.

model dwellings movement as a concession of capitalism that is designed to pacify the working classes and forestall the development of revolutionary sympathy; the buildings, both in structure and management, *purposely* inculcate inhabitants' passivity. In what follows, I set aside questions of whether the representation of a politically disengaged working class was Harkness's intended strategy to highlight the limits of philanthropic capitalism, and investigate the way the text unites the abortive ambitions of the model dwellings movement with the fallen woman narrative in order to offer a critique of both.

I

With an ambition to undertake sufficient research on the subject of model dwellings, and an intention to justify the novel's epithet, 'a realistic story', Harkness spent three months living at the Katharine Buildings in London's East End in 1889, where she participated in their management as a rent collector. Built on a slum clearance site by the East End Dwellings Company, the Katharine Buildings have been the focus of several historical studies in recent years, largely made possible by the records and diaries kept by the building's first rent-collectors, Beatrice Potter (later Webb) and Ella Pycroft.⁸ In 'Women Rent Collectors and the Rewriting of Space, Class and Gender East London, 1870-1900: The Case of Katharine Buildings, East Smithfield', Ruth Livesey offers an illuminating reading of the spatial and social practices of women rent collectors working in the East End, which teases out the interplay between middle-class surveillance and the 'tenants' levelling gaze'.⁹ Livesey's examination of the Katharine Buildings, and her consideration of Harkness, is in service to a historical project and for this reason the novel itself receives limited attention. Yet Livesey's study is important for its interpretation of the Katharine Buildings not only as a

8 See Rosemary O'Day, 'How Families Lived Then: Katharine Buildings, East Smithfield, 1885-1890', in *Studying Family and Community History: From Family Tree to Family History*, ed. by Ruth Finnegan and Michael Drake (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 129-167.

9 Ruth Livesey, 'Women Rent Collectors and the Rewriting of Space, Class and Gender in East London, 1870-1900: The Case of Katharine Buildings, East Smithfield', in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, ed. by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 87-106 (p. 98). See also Ruth Livesey, 'Women, Class and Social Action in Late-Victorian and Edwardian London', (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Warwick, 1999).

historically important site, but for its identification of the site *as* historical actor. In what follows, I develop Livesey's historical evaluation of the building's significance in order to examine the ways that *A City Girl* identifies the Katharine Buildings, which become the Charlotte's Buildings in the novel, as formative force in the lives of the novel's characters. The passivity induced by the Charlotte's Buildings is initially attributed to the weather, but it is also closely associated with the structural components and furnishings of the building: '[T]he maternal voices were drowsy, and the maternal strokes were languid, owing to the sultry weather', while '[i]n the buildings from six to eight hundred people stewed and panted, at doors and windows, upon beds, chairs and sofas' (11).¹⁰ When introduced, the inhabitants expand upon the narrator's observations by explaining that the buildings are 'cheap and nasty' (9), and an old woman remarks, 'rich people think they'll keep us from coming nigh 'em by packing us close like this' (11). Such testimony aligns the tenants' physical immobility – they are so constrained as to be barely able to breathe – with their social immobility. The East End Dwellings Company had purchased the awkwardly shaped site in 1883, which was made available after the clearances initiated by the Metropolitan Board of Works' Whitechapel and Limehouse Improvement Scheme (1879-1881). The fact that the site was narrowly sandwiched between the Royal Mint and another site purchased by the Peabody Trust, and that the company was legally obliged to rehouse an unrealistic number of people evicted during the clearance, resulted in a structure hardly more comfortable than the buildings it replaced.¹¹ Given the novel's dedication to realism in style, influenced no doubt by Harkness's concurrent journalistic work, it is not surprising that the building and its situation are described with precision, as according to architects' plans and elevations, even if the names are altered slightly: Cartwright Street becomes Wright Street, for instance, and Cable Street becomes Abel Street. It is significant that the narrator describes not the building's front elevation, but the rear elevation: this was the perspective familiar to inhabitants but mostly unseen by the public. Architects Emmanuel & Davis

10 John Law [Margaret Harkness], *A City Girl: A Realistic Story* (London: Vizetelly & Co, 1887), pp. 7-9. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

11 John Nelson Tarn, *Five Per Cent Philanthropy* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 82; Wohl, p. 134.

designed the structure so that traffic into and out of the building was restricted from the dominant perspective, that is its position on Cartwright Street (Figure 1). Instead, for tenants to enter the building there was a narrow passage between the north facade and an adjacent building that provided access into a yard which faced the back of the Royal Mint (Figure 2). Unlike other model dwelling companies such as the Improved Industrial Dwellings Corporation or the Peabody Trust, which provided housing mostly for the artisan classes, the Katharine Buildings were intended to house the lowest classes of casual workers in the East End. In response to the architects' plans Octavia Hill commented 'that the fittings should be of the simplest in view of the destructive habits of the tenants, the buildings airy and wholesome, and the rents low'.¹² Whether deliberately or not, the building was designed in a way to ensure that tenants were hidden from view to people passing by Cartwright Street and Cable Street. In addition to restricting traffic's passage into and out of the building, such a design would have ensured that tenants would socialise in the rear yard out of public view. The inhabitants of the Katharine Buildings, therefore, were not only physically restricted by the cramped site and internal overcrowding, but the design enforced their social invisibility. Whereas the front elevation looked not unlike the regulated brick facades and stacked chimneys of accommodation provided by other model dwelling companies, from the rear elevation one discovered that:

[t]he buildings were not beautiful to look upon; they might have even been termed ugly. Their long yellow walls were lined with small windows; upon the rails of their stiff iron balconies hung shirts, blankets and other articles fresh from the wash-tub. Inside their walls brown doors opened into dark stone passages; and narrow winding staircases led from passage to passage up to the roof. (*A City Girl*, 10)

The perspective described by the narrator of *A City Girl* is precisely the one the architects of the building wished to conceal from public view. The above description calls the reader's attention to the ways in which housing design was also very often social design. The novel suggests that while

12 Qtd. in John Nelson Tarn, *Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association, 1971), p. 27.

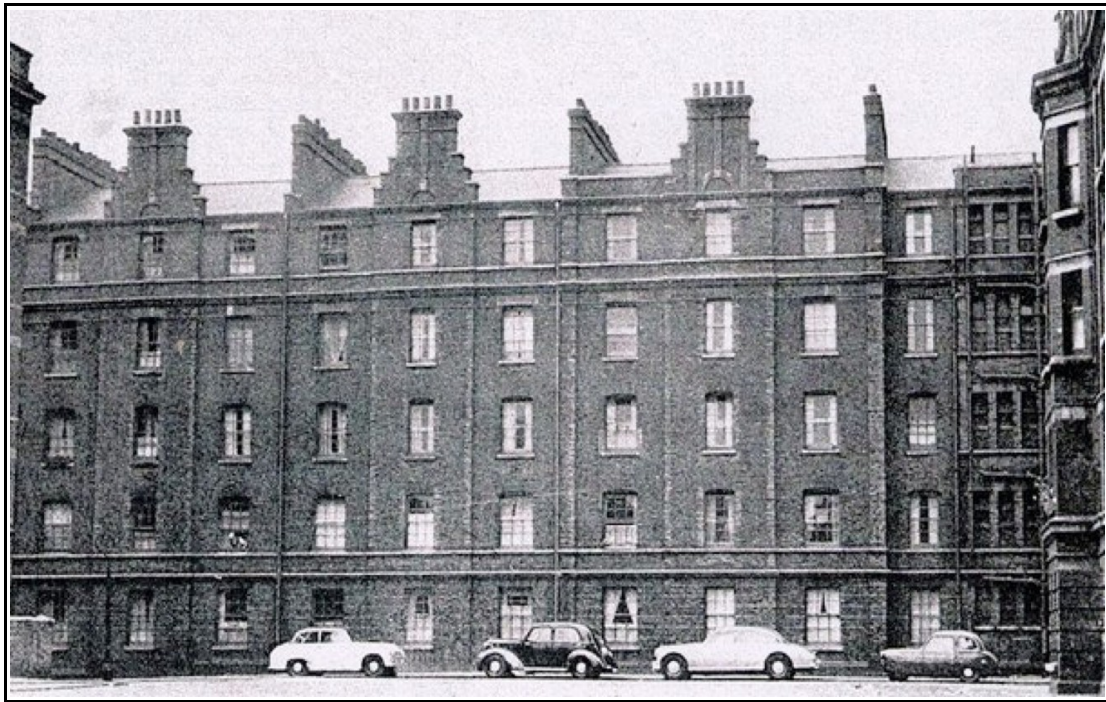


Figure 1: The Katharine Buildings, Cartwright Street (built 1884; photo c. 1960).

Source: John Nelson Tarn, *Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association, 1971), p. 71.



Figure 2: The Katharine Buildings, Rear Courtyard (built 1884; photo c. 1960).

Source: John Nelson Tarn, *Working-Class Housing in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association, 1971), p. 72.

model dwellings companies wished to provide charitable housing for the working classes, this practice was underpinned by a desire to obscure rather than solve the problems of capitalism. The substandard design of the Charlotte's Buildings, the text suggests, worked to placate middle-class concern about insanitary housing and at the same time physically and socially pacify the working classes; as the narrator suggests, '[t]he company wished to put money in their pockets; and, so long as the rents were forthcoming, did not care what went on in the Charlotte's Buildings' (55).

The model dwellings movement's moral crusade often sought to elevate working-class behaviour to middle-class expectations of propriety. In addition to questioning the motivations of capitalist philanthropy and the model dwellings movement, *A City Girl* also interrogates the philosophy of self-help by aligning government paternalism with what Deborah Epstein Nord describes as the 'ideological hypocrisies and the personal callousness of the politically committed bourgeoisie'.¹³ Although *A City Girl* follows the conventional narrative of the fallen woman, there are important differences that attest to what Sally Ledger refers to as Harkness's 'feminist credentials'.¹⁴ For instance, while the working-class seamstress Nelly Ambrose is seduced by a middle-class *dilettante* who leaves her with an illegitimate child, Ledger points out that she avoids the classic descent into prostitution.¹⁵ Equally important is that, four years before the controversy roused by Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), Harkness identifies social inequity as the principal villain in the fallen woman narrative: her novel emphasises circumstance over character. Even the philandering self-styled radical by whom Nelly is seduced is eventually exonerated. Neither the narrator, nor Nelly herself, hold Arthur Grant to account for his behaviour. At the novel's conclusion, when the reader is eager for retribution, all that is offered is Nelly's admission that her pregnancy 'wasn't all his fault' (162). The representation of Arthur Grant as egotistical and asinine is in many ways a more powerful critique of male sexuality than the

13 Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 195.

14 Ledger, p. 44.

15 Ibid., p. 45.

conventional nefariousness that characterises Alec d'Urberville. More significant for the present analysis, however, is the association of the fallen woman narrative with the self-interested and abortive efforts of the model dwellings movement. The text makes clear that Nelly's interest in Arthur Grant is grounded in social status; it is his capacity to take her on outings to the park and the theatre and his middle-class mannerisms and attire (which Nelly contrasts with those of the building's caretaker) by which she is seduced, and not by personal charisma, of which he has very little. Unusually, Arthur Grant's interest in Nelly is accidental; there is no malicious plotting but rather it fails to occur to him that '[factory] "hands" have hearts' (77). In fact, much like philanthropic capitalists, he congratulates himself for having any interest in the working classes at all: 'He felt very satisfied with himself that evening. He had cause, he thought, for contentment. Not only was he giving a little East End girl great pleasure, but he had just run away from the charms of a married lady, with whom he had been greatly tempted to flirt' (74). Arthur Grant's self-interest, obliviousness to the realities of working-class life, and propensity for energetically celebrating his own generosity corresponds in this text to the East End Dwelling Company's involvement in working-class housing. The company, like many others, was happy to design buildings for the working classes without any input from – or indeed, and consideration of – the lifestyles of those for whom they were designed. For instance, Octavia Hill insisted that one communal lavatory per floor was sufficient for the Katharine Buildings, although she and others were scandalised when the residents used this space for socialising, although no other area for this purpose had been provided.¹⁶ Most model dwellings companies also remained indifferent in inhabitants' lives after the buildings were completed. In *A City Girl*, the simple but good-natured caretaker George is not only charged with maintaining order in the buildings, but also helps correct the narrative disorder by offering to marry Nelly once she is abandoned by Arthur Grant. Not coincidentally, it is George who expresses the clearest criticism of model dwellings companies. He comments that the model dwellings company cares little about the lives of inhabitants, that it is concerned only to 'pocket the

¹⁶ O'Day, p. 146; p. 148.

rents and until there's a murder they'll make no difference' to the lives of tenants (124). Yet the response which follows – 'And they call themselves philanthropists!' (125) – is a charge levelled not only at the corporation, but is also a personal remark directed at disingenuous socialist radicals like Arthur Grant.

II

The novel develops this association between romantic paternalism and philanthropic capitalism by demonstrating the futility of moralising initiatives like Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) under Victorian capitalism. Sally Ledger correctly observes that Nelly is 'emphatically unexceptional' insofar as representations of nineteenth-century working-class women go; however, Nelly *is* exceptional in the context of the Charlotte's Buildings.¹⁷ Unlike the other residents Nelly is preoccupied by her own middle-class aspirations, which involve an ambition '[t]o sit on a sofa, to read a novelette, to sip coffee with a teaspoon, to have someone to put on and take off her boots' (16-7). Nelly is described as hard-working, favoured by her employer for her skill at sewing trousers, and is contrasted at home with her brother the 'loafer' (23). As suggested, her fascination with Arthur Grant owes as much to social status as it does to any genuine romantic interest, and in this sense, Nelly's aspiration is the cause of her 'fall'. If the Charlotte's Buildings are representative of the social and physical coercion of the working classes, Arthur Grant's suburban home in West Kensington equally illustrates of the futility of middle-class material ambition. At Christmas, Nelly travels across the city by taking the Underground from Mansion House to Arthur Grant's home in West Kensington in order to inform him of her pregnancy. In addition to drawing on the conventions of the fallen woman narrative, this scene is also a retelling of the Holy Family's search for shelter on the night of Christ's birth. Recast as the figure of Mary (and therefore absolved from blame), Nelly emerges from the Underground into the heavy snow and walks slowly along the pavement peering into the uncovered windows where she 'stops short in front of a bow window'

¹⁷ Ledger, p. 45.

(97) to see Arthur Grant ensconced in idealised domesticity with his wife and child by the fireplace. The residential suburb of West Kensington was itself consciously aspirational: it had been developed alongside the construction of the Metropolitan District Railway station of Fulham (North End) which opened in 1874. The station was renamed West Kensington in 1877 in an effort to associate the growing neighbourhood with the more centrally located area of Kensington proper, and soon became a popular area for authors and artists (William Butler Yeats, Edward Burne-Jones and H. Rider Haggard all lived in the neighbourhood in the latter half of the nineteenth century).¹⁸ It is significant that Nelly stops in front of the bow window, or curved bay window, which was a defining feature of terraced housing built in middle-class suburbs during the nineteenth century. In a thirteen-page article that appeared in *British Architect* in 1898, 'The Morality of the Bay Window', the author notes that the extravagance of the bay window means that it is 'bound to be either the glory or the shame of a building to which [it is] applied'.¹⁹ In the novel the bow window, at least from Nelly's perspective, provides both: interior glory and exterior shame. The bow or bay window, which projects beyond the structural wall of the building, is designed to provide a broader view of the building's exterior (generally in residential architecture the garden). However in this scene, the bow window becomes a thrust stage which grants Nelly sight of but no access to the domestic picture of the house's interior. Nelly is physically and socially fenced out of her middle-class ambitions, and in protest her 'arms shook on the railings; [and] she could hear her teeth chattering' (98), but she soon finds 'the shutters closed and the picture she had been watching vanished into darkness' (99). The symbolism is clear: Nelly is denied even the image of her own delusion. Whereas '[Arthur] lived in a different world than the one she had imagined – a world shut in by the golden gates of domestic peace and happiness' (99-100) and the morality of the bay window.

The chapter, appropriately titled 'East and West', demonstrates by way of Nelly's journey

18 Jo Swinnerton, *The London Companion* (London: Robson, 2004), p. 103. The district is also lightly ridiculed for similar reasons in George Bernard Shaw's novel *The Irrational Knot* (London: Constable & Co., 1905; Republished 1914).

19 Paul Waterhouse, 'The Morality of the Bay Window' *British Architect*, 2 (1898), 398-410 (p. 398).

'how far, how very far, the East is from the West [...] [and] that Whitechapel may talk to Kensington, and Kensington may shake hands with Whitechapel, but between them there is a great gulf fixed' (100-1). In this scene, the narrative not only addresses romantic and social inequity, but also dismisses the capitalist system on which it suggests both are founded. The narrator remarks that '[h]ad [Nelly] seen him there, looking out at the night, thinking whether he would go to his club or see what his wife had at home for dinner, saying to himself that it was a nuisance to be poor and forced to live in the suburbs, yawning, and putting up his eye-glass, she would have been astonished' (99). As Engels identifies in *The Housing Question*, private property is not a system in which equality is possible, but instead 'chain[s a person] in semi-feudal fashion' to capitalism.²⁰ The subtext here is that Nelly's vision of the comfortable middle-class home is just that: a naïve illusion driven by the aspirational economy of the city's housing market. Unlike Nelly, the reader is let into the interior of the middle-class home, but only to discover its inhabitants are bored, unhappy and perceive themselves to be 'poor'. The novel is structured around the material differences between middle-class suburbs and the poorer neighbourhoods of the city's East End – but here it calls attention to similarities rather than differences: all social groups, the novel suggests, are bound by the 'chains' of material ambition. Even as Nelly walks through the West End neighbourhood she notices that the 'roads looked all alike; the rows of houses showed no difference' (101). Much like the experiences of middle-class novelists and journalists investigating East End slums, Nelly is 'bewildered' (96) by her experience of the West End. Using the language of the investigative literature that bolstered public interest in the work of the model dwellings movement, the text describes the bewildering sameness of urban space not as a characteristic of economically deprived areas, but instead as a result of estrangement produced by social difference. Although a 'great gulf' may seem to be fixed between the material experiences of the working classes and the middle classes, they are united by the futility of their ambitions under capitalism.

²⁰ Engels, p. 17.

III

Contemporary reviewers of *A City Girl* were pleased to find that 'the story ends happily enough' with a proposal of marriage and a move to the country.²¹ *The Athenaeum* expresses surprise that the author had 'contrived so happy an ending for what threatened to be a tragedy.'²² More recently, scholars have also read the novel's ending as filtered through nineteenth-century romantic conventions. This is of course true to an extent because, as Ingrid Von Rosenberg acknowledges, it was necessary that the characters or story not be overly objectionable if it were to disseminate its socialist message to the desired audience.²³ Yet Harkness's method is strategic in that she introduces these conventions, but does not fully espouse them: although the caretaker George proposes to Nelly after the death of her child, she does not agree to the marriage in the space of the narrative. While a move to the country is also proposed, the novel ends where it began: in the Charlotte's Buildings. While the narrative may seem to offer a conventional form of closure through marriage, an equally important resolution is a proposal of an alternative to the model dwellings movement and private property ownership. George explains to Nelly that he plans to move

[i]nto the country. There's a society, or a club, just started, I don't know quite what they call it, but it is made up of people who write books. They've got a lot of little cottages, about an hour out of London; and they want someone to look after the gardens [...]. It's a very nice place [...] and a lot cleaner than the buildings.
(188)

The novel alludes to cooperative housing societies, a few of which were developing on the fringes of London at the end of the century. The meals are to be cooked and carried to the cottages by two servants, a position George implies would be suitable for Nelly. Yet Nelly's response to this proposal ('Oh, I ain't worth it!'), and George's pronouncement of his familiar incantation throughout the novel ('I wish I'd never left the service') (190), contradicts any notion of marital bliss or equality.

21 'A City Girl', *Time*, May 1887, p. 638.

22 'Novels of the Week', *The Athenaeum*, 30 April 1887, p. 572-574 (p. 573).

23 Ingrid Von Rosenberg, 'French Naturalism and the English Socialist Novel: Margaret Harkness and William Edwards Tirebuck', in *The Rise of Socialist Fiction 1880-1914*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus (Brighton: Harvester, 1987), p. 158.

It is possible here that Harkness refers to the communities planned by the Tenant Cooperators Ltd., a housing cooperative established in 1887 with the ambition of constructing houses around London that would be let at nominal rents to local working-class groups who would receive a dividend credited to the share account; the houses, although initially supported by outside shareholders, would eventually be owned collectively by tenants.²⁴ More likely, Harkness mocks 'communistic societies' such as the Fellowship of New Life, which aimed to expunge social divisions in part by uniting physical and intellectual labour.²⁵ As Livesey remarks, the Fellowship 'provided an easy target for satire', and was perceived by many contemporaries as a 'band of sentimental Luddites' with the thoroughly middle-class ambition of 'resigning from lucrative professions to become market gardeners'.²⁶ While the housing cooperative and its middle-class artists' colony is presented as an attractive alternative to life in the buildings, both Nelly and George would remain in service to people much like Arthur Grant. The housing cooperative does not offer a solution to nor does it even address to problems of gender unearthed by the novel. As George explains about the housing cooperative he asks Nelly to make him tea, fill his pipe, and 'take her old place' at his knee (187). Sally Ledger has identified the tensions in *A City Girl* between socialism and feminism and suggests that Harkness refuses to 'conform unequivocally to either paradigm'.²⁷ *A City Girl* identifies projects of model dwellings corporations as misguided in their attempt to address social problems with the very system that created them. It is also no mistake that Harkness aligns this movement with the narrative conventions of the fallen woman; although Arthur Grant espouses socialist philosophy, lectures at East End radical clubs, and writes psychological novels, he is oblivious to women's different exploitation under capitalist patriarchy – so much so that he personally perpetuates this system out of his own self-interest. While *A City Girl* casts light on material solutions to the housing question, it acknowledges that intrinsic to this question are further

24 Johnston Birchall, *Building Communities: The Cooperative Way* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 94-95.

25 Qtd. in Livesey, *Socialism, Sex and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain 1880-1914*, p. 86.

26 Livesey, p. 86; p. 88.

27 Ledger, p. 44.

inequalities, particularly in view of gender, that must be separately addressed and differently solved.

'Who Will Purify the Soil?':
Slum Clearance and the Middle Classes in Julia Frankau's *A Babe in Bohemia* (1889)

Although Julia Frankau's *A Babe in Bohemia* (1889) differs from Harkness's *A City Girl* in its ideological position – it is a novel that advocates libertarianism – like *A City Girl* it aligns the paternalism of government attitudes toward London's housing problems with a conventional nineteenth-century narrative mode: the marriage plot. The novel follows the compromised development of Lucilla Lewisham who, just having reached the age of sexual maturity, enters into a bohemian and theatrical circle populated by her father and his rather unsavoury friends. As Nadia Valman suggests, the novel is preoccupied with the 'deformation wrought by modern London' – but unlike *A City Girl* there is no possibility of Lucilla's rescue through marriage and she instead commits suicide, having been '[c]ondemned by her Lamarkian inheritance of urban corruption'.²⁸ If the revised fallen woman narrative of *A City Girl* is enhanced by its spatial association with London's deprived East End, *A Babe in Bohemia* fixes the middle-class novel of marital ambitions in Bloomsbury. An important aspect of Frankau's novels (all of which were published under the pseudonym 'Frank Danby') that early critics and modern scholars often fail to identify is her use of satire.²⁹ Sarah Gracombe accurately identifies Frankau's 'slippery narrative voice', but neglects to mention that the inconsistent tone often results from the narrator's satirical dramatisation of a

28 Nadia Valman, *The Jewess in Nineteenth-Century British Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 200.

29 Although Frankau published fiction and literary criticism under the alias 'Frank Danby', her historical and art historical work was published under her own name. Like Harkness's choice to publish much of her writing under the pseudonym 'John Law', Frankau's decision to publish under a male name seems unable to be reduced simply to a concern about women's status in the literary marketplace. A more thorough consideration of the reasons that novelists such as Harkness and Frankau chose to publish not under their own names unfortunately exceeds the parameters of this thesis. On the diverse and manifold reasons that some women published under male pen names, see Catherine A. Judd, 'Male Pseudonyms and Female Authority in Victorian Fiction', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing & Reading Practices*, ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 250-268.

variety of narrative modes.³⁰ Frankau's early novels energetically engage with and subvert the thematic and formal narrative conventions of the nineteenth-century novel; while this makes the text's critical tone apparent, it is often less clear what precisely is being criticised. Frankau's later work exchanges this satirical mode for one that is sentimental but inflected with periodic outbursts of irony or parody. It is significant that Frankau's sister identifies her first short story as an 'attempt at a parody of a villanelle by Oscar Wilde', for it indicates that in her earliest work Frankau was interested in forms of allusion and imitation.³¹ This is sometimes evident as a form of gentle parody, as is the case with her later portrait of Wilde in the novel *The Sphinx's Lawyer* (1906).³² In other texts, like *A Babe in Bohemia*, the same practice erupts into uncomfortable Juvenalian satire. Frankau's first novel, the *succès de scandale* *Dr. Phillips: A Maida Vale Idyll* (1887), hyperbolises contemporary debates about racial degeneracy to the extent that the narrative acquires a sense of self-consciousness that is suggestive of satire. Nevertheless, the novel's intensity makes it difficult to ascertain the precise object or the purposes of this satire. Valman provides the most coherent interpretation of the critical voice used in *Dr. Phillips*: the novel, she suggests, is a 'highly allusive mutation of the *fin de siècle* literary critique of Jewish patriarchy, which draws on a rich seam of nineteenth-century semitic discourse'.³³ More precisely, Valman reads the novel's imagery as expressive of a concern shared with liberal feminists about the 'vulnerable bodies of England's women'.³⁴ This is a concern, I argue, that is also evident in Frankau's second novel, *A Babe in Bohemia*.

Blacklisted by the circulating libraries upon its publication, *A Babe in Bohemia* is clearer than *Dr. Phillips* in the direction of its criticism: the novel burlesques slum literature, a genre which had

30 Sarah Gracombe, 'Imperial Englishness in Julia Frankau's "Book of the Jew"', *Prooftexts*, 30.2 (2010), 147-179 (p. 158).

31 Eliza Davis Aria, *My Sentimental Self* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1922), p. 16. The short story appeared *The World: a Journal for Men and Women* (which was founded by Edmund Yates) in 1882 and has hitherto been unacknowledged in critical studies. *The World* is available in the British Library, but the particular edition with Frankau's story is currently inaccessible. For this reason, I have not yet been able to discover the title of the story.

32 Wilde's caricature in this novel, Algernon Heseltine, is a gentle mocking of personal folly, but much else (including aestheticism more broadly) is treated caustically.

33 Valman, p. 194.

34 Ibid.

developed mid-century and gained momentum during the 1880s, and pays special attention to purportedly authentic accounts of life in the slums, such as Andrew Mearns's pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* (1883). One of the ways in which the novel produces its satire is to shift attention geographically from the East End, or the more central slum life of St. Giles and Seven Dials, to the allegedly middle-class neighbourhood of Bloomsbury – but these are the very socio-economic designations that the novel interrogates. *A Babe in Bohemia* engages with topical urban concerns like overcrowding and sanitation, but is most concerned with the problems initiated by government intervention, principally slum clearance. Although city improvements may have been designed with the ambition to elevate the condition of the deserving poor by enabling 'immediate communication with a more respectable inhabitancy' through broader roads and open spaces, Frankau's novel argues that the changes wrought by such actions were as threatening to women's bodies as the marriage plot's suffocating paternalism was to their autonomy.³⁵

I

By the turn of the nineteenth century the notorious rookery of St. Giles, situated at the east end of Oxford Street and south of Great Russell Street, had developed into one of London's worst slums. The neighbourhood's reputation for criminal behaviour, deplorable sanitation and moral depravity was documented in the work William Hogarth, Gustav Doré and perhaps most memorably by Charles Dickens in *Sketches by Boz* (1836). More recently, scholars have examined the importance of St. Giles, and other districts like it, in calling government attention to London's housing crisis – even if the slum clearance that was the solution to this problem proved more pernicious than the crisis itself.³⁶ Historians have also noted that when the city's select committee of 1838 identified St. Giles as an area that would benefit from 'Improvements', namely the construction of a long broad

³⁵ *Second Report from Select Committee on Metropolis Improvements; with the Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Plans*, 1838 p. iv, qtd. in Jerry White, *London in the 19th Century: A Human Awful Wonder of God* (London: Vintage, 2008), p. 30.

³⁶ See White, p. 30-36. See also Tristram Hunt, *Building Jerusalem: the Rise and Fall of the Victorian City* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), p. 290-291.

thoroughfare that would become New Oxford Street, they failed to consider what would become of the neighbourhood's inhabitants – which numbered in the thousands – once their homes were destroyed.³⁷ St. Giles was cleared and New Oxford Street laid out by 1847, and while some residents moved to the city's other slum districts that had not yet been subject to improvements, many remained the area. Matthew Ingleby has written of Bloomsbury during the mid-nineteenth century as a middle-class neighbourhood threatened by the spectre of the slum so recently dispersed; he has also pointed out the area's dwindling status during the mid-century as the single-family dwellings occupied by those in the legal profession were replaced by subdivided houses occupied by bachelors and the lower middle classes.³⁸ Although *A Babe in Bohemia* draws attention to the effects of slum clearance projects that began before the establishment of the Metropolitan Board of Works, similar projects in nearby areas continued after its creation in 1856: clearance of the slums near Holborn began in 1867, and Shaftesbury Avenue cut through a similar neighbourhood in 1886.³⁹ The presence of these districts looms throughout the novel, but it is the social and geographic implications of government intervention for the neighbourhood's middle classes that are problematised in the text.

In an article published in *British Architect* in 1884, T. Robert Smith notes that public buildings – colleges, schools, hospitals and workhouses – are almost always designed by architects, as are the 'dwellings of the highly-placed'; the model dwellings movement had also ensured that designs for the homes of the 'urban labouring populations [...] are almost always put into the hands of architects'.⁴⁰ The homes of the middle classes, however, were most often built by speculative builders who used a standard plan for multiple dwellings in a concentrated area. These buildings were jerry-built, and designed to maximise profit for developers and investors. While authors churned out great quantities of slum fiction about the houses of the urban poor and working classes,

37 White, p. 32.

38 Matthew Ingleby, 'The Bachelorisation of Legal Bloomsbury', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 8.2 (2012), n.p. <<http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue82/ingleby.htm>> [accessed 15 May 2013]

39 Wohl, pp. 26-7. See also J.A. Yelling, *Slums and Slum Clearance in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Routledge, 1986; 2007), p. 42. Yelling notes that the slums had been 'squeezed out' of Holborn from the 1840s.

40 T. Roger Smith, 'Sanitary Houses', *British Architect*, 22.3 (1884), p. 33.

Frankau suggests that these individuals were often blind to the hazards present in their own communities. In *A Babe in Bohemia*, the neighbourhood of bohemia (which is roughly Bloomsbury) is described in such a way as to underscore the problems created by philanthropic meddling and government intervention. The opening pages of *A Babe in Bohemia* construct the geographical parameters of the novel's principal setting and comment on its insalubrious character. The home of the protagonists

is a low house leading straight on to the street; its windows are dulled with the smoke from Tottenham Court Road, and dreary with mists from Russell Square. The railings are begrimed, the stone area green and worn with neglect and decay. The bell hangs loosely in its socket, and the knocker is wrenched off its bidding-place. But for all its dirt, neglect, decay, No. 200 Southampton Row is in the City – the gay, rollicking, careless City of Bohemia.⁴¹

The novel's style parodies the slum literature of writers such as George Sims and especially Andrew Mearns, who were concerned with London's East End, but applies this discourse to the fashionably bohemian neighbourhood of Bloomsbury. The text consistently refers to the neighbourhood's insanitary or hazardous atmosphere – here it is 'smoke' and 'mist' – and, as I will discuss further in this chapter, the house's interior is characterised by an equally suffocating and 'smoke-laden atmosphere' (39). While such terms – as well as the use of hyperbole in describing the 'hot and noxious atmosphere' and 'general murkiness' (5) – are conventional of much urban literature (Mearns speaks of 'courts reeking with poisonous and malodorous gasses arising from accumulations of sewage and refuse scattered in all directions and often flowing beneath your feet'), their association with the miasmatic theory of disease makes them somewhat anachronistic.⁴² Until the middle of the nineteenth century, the transmission of disease had been most often attributed to the 'noxious gasses and effluvia of decomposing faecal matter'.⁴³ Although this changed with the

41 Frank Danby [Julia Frankau], *A Babe in Bohemia* (London: Spencer Blackett, 1889), p. 1-2. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

42 Andrew Mearns, *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London: An Enquiry into the Condition of the Abject Poor* (London: James Clarke, 1883), p. 7.

43 Wohl, p. 6.

development of germ theory, to which Dr. John Snow's study of London's cholera epidemic in 1854 contributed greatly, Tristram Hunt points out that this theory of transmission (in relation to cholera) was not fully accepted until 1884.⁴⁴ In the latter half of the century this disease began to affect the middle classes just as it had earlier affected the working classes and the urban poor. This led to government initiatives in sanitation that eventually advanced public understanding about the transmission of disease. By 1889, Frankau's recurring references to the 'foul breath of the city' (5) were no longer representative of a literal fear of bad air, but are instead used in the text to refer to the working-class neighbourhoods that were now dispersed and consequently more difficult to define or limit. Even as a metaphor, the terminology participates in a discourse used previously to convey to the middle classes their common vulnerability to what may have been perceived to be only working-class problems. The insidious influence slowly and visibly befouls Bohemia; dwellings like 200 Southampton Row threaten to contaminate neighbouring houses: 'Respectability frowns at it from over the way, whitens its steps perennially, brightens its bellhandles, and hangs up its white window-curtains' (2). The novel suggests that like disease, the housing question unites individuals and communities across the economic and geographic spectrum – and that slum clearance was hazardous not only to those who lived in slums.

The grimy exterior of 200 Southampton Row is evidence of the moral depravity of its inhabitants, and it is by way of this correlation that the novel expresses concern about the nature of city improvement projects such as slum clearance. If governments intervened in ways designed to improve the moral character of city districts, then what, this novel asks, was to stop such projects extending to the practices within the neighbourhood's homes. This is particularly a concern, Frankau suggests, when improvement projects do not attempt to solve but rather disperse or disguise significant social problems such as poverty. In *A Babe in Bohemia*, Frankau uses the physical layout of the house at 200 Southampton Row to demonstrate that a highly-regulated space is not necessarily free from vice. The model dwellings movement constructed buildings for the

⁴⁴ Hunt, p. 217.

working classes that were programmatically designed by philanthropic capitalists, and while the internal accommodation was modest, the internal space was often flexible and could be adapted to purpose (with the exception of the scullery, the location of which was typically fixed). Furthermore, builders contracted by model dwellings companies were legally required to build accommodation with adequate ventilation, drainage, and open space.⁴⁵ Middle-class dwellings were, as stated, typically built by developers on speculation and were not bound by the same structural standards. The mid-century terraced house, still recognisable throughout London today, systematised the physical layout of the home in order to correspond to specific activities. This resulted in a plan that consisted of a series of small specialised rooms. This prescriptive design suggests that bedrooms were only to be used for sleeping, children were confined to the nursery, and socialising was limited to the drawing room. Donald J. Olsen points out that it is unclear how rigidly such dictates were followed, but notes that 'the general design of the house seemed intended to separate both the sexes and the generations'.⁴⁶ While the trend for this systematised layout was not initiated by legislative development, in *A Babe in Bohemia* it is aligned with city improvements schemes as a method by which to regulate and control domestic space. And it is these methods of control that the novel treats as particularly threatening for women. The local smoke and mists of Bohemia are matched and exacerbated by the home's equally stifling interior:

The reception-rooms in Southampton Row were curious – they all opened into each other like a set of Japanese boxes. Four rooms in all, the one in front, which was used as a dining-room, being the largest; from that they grew gradually smaller until the end one, which was little more than an extensive recess. They were all untidy, artistic, scrappy. (39)

The home's discrete spaces do not prevent an 'untidy' atmosphere, and its claustrophobic interior suggests the ways in which the protagonist, Lucilla Lewisham, has been unnaturally limited in her

⁴⁵ Tarn, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Donald J. Olsen, *The City as a Work of Art: London, Paris, Vienna* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 110.

development. As a child, Lucilla is stowed away in the attic with her epileptic brother Marius until he dies in a violent fit. After his death, she is permitted to enter into the seedy bohemian society of her father and his unscrupulous mistress. These small and suffocating rooms of the house's interior afford Lucilla no greater freedom than did the 'sloping-roofed attic' (28) in which she spent her childhood. At Southampton Row, the interior rooms are not used for those conventional middle-class activities with which they are associated. The attic, with its twine netting and grated window, resembles a cage more than it does a nursery. Similarly, the drawing room was 'daily and nightly thronged with a company difficult to parallel in any other city than London' (12). The narration parodies the descriptions of single-room tenements that appear in slum literature, particularly in the descriptions of overcrowding and the insinuation of sexual impropriety. Frankau points out, just as Harkness does in *A City Girl*, that middle-class dwellings do not guarantee virtuous inhabitants and that – specifically for women – these spaces are potentially as limiting as those found in slum neighbourhoods.

II

In *A Babe in Bohemia*, the spatial restrictiveness of the house at 200 Southampton Row is associated with the government's growing intervention into matters of housing provision during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. For this it is helpful to consider the novel's alleged hero, Mordaunt Rivers, whose first name homophonically indicates his generally sardonic temperament but also diminishes the reader's expectation that he might serve as a moral force and the protagonist's rescuer. *A Babe in Bohemia* aligns Mordaunt's sentimental pity and questionable motivations for rescuing Lucilla from the sordid atmosphere of Southampton Row with the state paternalism of the recent legislature proposed by the London County Council (LCC). Created by the Local Government Act (1888) of the previous year, the LCC began its work in January 1889 to

consolidate the tangled housing legislation that had been developed since mid-century.⁴⁷ It is less important for the present argument to determine whether *A Babe in Bohemia* intentionally challenges the specific authority of the LCC in the representation of Mordaunt Rivers than it is to consider the ways in which the text engages with contemporary debate about London's governance and those topics, like the housing question, which were at a their peak during the moment of the LCC's formation. Once Lucilla is released from the attic where she had been confined from her youth, her step-mother conspires to put an end to her 'purity' by encouraging her seduction at the hands of the men who attend daily 'orgies' at the house (14). Despite the 'absolutely low opinion he had of women' (56), Mordaunt Rivers develops a degree of pity for Lucilla – but it is one that is motivated not by chivalry but by prurience. Although Mordaunt wishes to coax himself out of even this compromised level of concern and '[restore] himself to his normal state of indifference to vice and virtue' (64), the objectionable behaviour of Lucilla's father and stepmother places him in an uncomfortable position that is at once father figure and romantic interest.

Mordaunt's language reflects the pathos and charity he feels towards Lucilla, but very slowly these emotions become erotically charged: she is referred to initially as 'poor child, poor child!' (99); shortly thereafter he describes her as a '[p]oor little girl! poor little neglected girl' (128); and eventually as a '[p]oor little girl; poor little, pretty little girl!' (129). The narrator acknowledges that Mordaunt's pity and sympathy are provoked when he is witness to Lucilla's maltreatment (130-1), but the language that gives expression to these emotions also reveals his erotic interest in Lucilla: 'Mordaunt's heart swelled with pity; he grew hot with anger against [her father]' (125). This 'hot' and 'swell[ing]' pity is clearly sexually charged, and the uncomfortable implication is that it is Lucilla's dejected and pitiable state which he finds arousing. Mordaunt is attracted to Lucilla not in spite of her suffering, but because of her suffering – and this is a paradox that Frankau's novel suggests is central to the nineteenth-century marriage plot. This observation is made more explicit

47 'The Times Special Correspondent', *The Story of the London County Council* (London: The Times Office, 1907), p. 1. The LCC differed from its predecessor, the Metropolitan Board of Works, in that its members were elected rather than appointed; it also formed a cohesive government across the city by creating 28 metropolitan boroughs.

when Mordaunt begins to refer to Lucilla as 'baby' (146). Although the word was not used as a term of endearment during the nineteenth century, its use in this context underscores its double signification: it is affectionate, but also diminishing. The novel's exposure of the more dishonourable implications of the marriage plot occurs on the occasion of a day trip out of London. Rather than restore the damage caused by the insalubrious city with its salutary atmosphere and wholesome pleasures, Lucilla's day out on the river with Mordaunt provokes a violent epileptic fit. The scene parodies aspects of novels such as Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853) in which characters' lives are improved simply by their removal to a rural environment, and implies that the isolation of this environment is as potentially detrimental to women's health and security as is the purportedly noxious urban atmosphere. This pastoral scene reveals that Mordaunt's paternal attentiveness is governed as much by self-interest as it is by sympathy or affection. The double signification made explicit by terms such as 'baby' encourages the reader's apprehension of the menacing undercurrent to Mordaunt's language. For instance, Lucilla enquires about the day's activities and he explains thus:

'Where are we going?'
'Can't you restrain your impatience until we get there?' he
answered teasingly.
'No, no; tell me.'
'Well, we are going a little trip to Fairyland.'
'Will there be fairies?'
'Yes; great big handsome men-fairies.' (145)

The unsettling discordance between the literal subject, and its actual implication (including the contradictory image of the 'great big handsome men-fairies'), continues throughout the scene. Although Lucilla believes herself to be safe, Mordaunt having taken on the role of father figure, he mutters to himself under his breath: 'And yet – and yet [...] you are not so safe with me but what – ' (149).

The concern the text expresses about the sincerity of paternalism, and what more threatening

motivations it could conceal, engages with similar debates about the level of government involvement in regulating housing. As stated, *A Babe in Bohemia* parodies the conventions of slum novels – but it so does partly to satirise the paternalist initiatives of municipal government. In particular, Frankau is skeptical of writers like Andrew Mearns who conclude lengthy and verbose moral recriminations with paltry and reductive requests that the state 'secure for the poorest the rights of citizenship; the right to live in something better than fever dens'.⁴⁸ The LCC was not formed until six years after Mearns made his request for state intervention, but increasing legislation combined with debate in parliament and in the press about the government's role in housing provision raised such issues earlier in the decade. Despite general fears about the emergence of radicalism and socialism (and notwithstanding the formation of the Liberty and Property Defence League in 1882), by 1884 parliament appointed a Royal Commission on Housing that insisted on the central government's role in domiciliary concerns.⁴⁹ Although the commissioners were inspired by genuine concern, their efforts lacked immediacy which, Wohl explains, 'is typical of [a] paternalistic approach to the housing question'.⁵⁰ *A Babe in Bohemia* is cautious about the development of state paternalism, but not because it might lack immediacy in its effect. Instead, the text is concerned about the ways that state paternalism might compromise women's autonomy.

Much like Arthur Grant in *A City Girl*, Mordaunt Rivers escapes the characterisation of a conventionally nefarious villain. In fact, his behaviour is often more unfathomable than it is squarely objectionable. One reviewer even claims that of all of characters in the novel he is the only one suitable to 'be touched with tongs and a stout pair of gardening gloves'.⁵¹ There is some sincerity in Mordaunt's concern for Lucilla's well-being, but the novel suggests that intentionality does not determine consequences. Mordaunt's paternalism is hazardous because it is predicated upon and consequently perpetuates Lucilla's weakness and inferiority. Similarly, the novel suggests,

48 Mearns, p. 15.

49 Wohl, p. 240.

50 Ibid., p. 242.

51 George Saintsbury, 'New Novels', *Academy*, 1 June 1889, p. 373.

paternalist initiatives of local governments risked exacerbating social inequity through legislation. The conclusion of *A Babe in Bohemia* makes clearer the association between narrative and legislative paternalism. After Lucilla is expelled from 200 Southampton Row, her step-mother feigning outrage at the impropriety of the outing to the country, Mordaunt intervenes and arranges for Lucilla to relocate from the Salvation Army – her home for a brief period – to a small cottage in the suburbs. Yet like their rural expedition, which should have improved Lucilla's health and given her enjoyment, Mordaunt's gambit further circumscribes Lucilla and leaves her more vulnerable than she had been previously. The novel briefly indulges the reader's expectation of the marriage plot's conventional ending: 'Then she knew happiness. He took two rooms for them at Twickenham; [...] This was the first home Lucilla had ever known. Mordaunt would sit and write, and she would watch him; she never liked to be far off him' (341). Yet this happy ending is compromised by the fact that Mordaunt, as it turns out, is already married. Soon enough, Lucilla's happiness is abraded by her isolation and dependence:

They led a life isolated from the world, living solely for each other. Mordaunt would write in the mornings, Lucilla beside him; in the afternoons, hand in hand like two children, they would wander about the country, or, strolling down to the river, would idly float to Richmond, all the green around them framing peace and happy love [...]. This lasted a month. (342)

The novel makes connections between popular perceptions of improved housing for the working classes and middle-class suburban housing. For here, the middle-class suburbs are damaging to women's autonomy in the same ways that subsidised housing was feared to create a culture of state-reliance. Although the first block of the LCC's first housing project, the Boundary Estate, would not be finished until 1896 (and the estate itself not opened until 1900), many of its later projects were 'out county' – that is, to be built outside of London – and would require the relocation of many of London's working-class residents.⁵² Numerous studies have explored the implications of relocating

⁵² Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 264.

urban working-class groups to the suburbs: there were fewer employers – many men and women were still required to travel into the city, services and infrastructure were lacking, communities and even families were torn asunder.⁵³ Despite trading London's insalubrious streets and squares for a cottage with a garden in Twickenham, there is little improvement to Lucilla's life: she 'neither read nor wrote, worked nor thought; her entire being was absorbed by [Mordaunt]' (342). An edition of the novel published in 1912 makes several changes to the final chapter, most of which emphasise the ways that Lucilla's 'career in practising dissimulation' while living in the suburbs frustrates her self-determination.⁵⁴

III

The novel's second conclusion, which occurs after this illusion of a resolution by marriage is dispelled, is both grotesque and burlesque. The paternalist intervention that delivered Lucilla from the bohemian slums is unable to protect her when she realises that '[t]his spreading, general uncleanness, this dirt, this decay, was real life' (170). Interestingly enough it is the author Sinclair Furley, whose character symbolises the moral dilemmas of literary realism just as Mordaunt Rivers personifies legislative paternalism, with whom the novel concludes. It is significant that Frankau includes a parody of the realist writer in her satire of slum fiction: Furley is as unsavoury, voyeuristic and debased as the subjects of his work. The literary form of realism is explained to Lucilla as such:

'A realist,' answered Rivers gravely, 'as De Gazet writes and Sinclair Furley exemplifies it, is a gentleman who sings, writes, and paints on subjects which more decent – I beg your pardon, my definition is wandering – of which less artistic people scarcely acknowledge that they think. A realist, according to the modern acceptation of the term, is a scavenger who finds the subjects of his labours in details which modesty leaves covered and police regulations

53 For instance, see Alison Ravetz, *Council Housing and Culture: the History of a Social Experiment* (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), p.167 and Lynsey Hanley, *Estates: An Intimate History* (London: Granta, 2007), pp. 19-21.

54 Frank Danby [Julia Frankau], *A Babe in Bohemia* (London: Stanley Paul, 1912), p. 211.

The realist 'De Gazet' to whom Rivers refers is no doubt a play on name of the Brothers de Goncourt, which emphasises their preoccupation with the publicity of sensational subjects (as in gazette). In his preoccupation with Lucilla, it is clear that Furley is 'scavenging' the details for a realist story by enacting its events personally: his attempt at seduction eventually results in Lucilla's graphic suicide. Through parody, the novel judges that paternalism is insufficient in guarding against the 'dirt [and] decay of real life' (170) as it is founded upon and reproduces vulnerability; it is a system as potentially hazardous to women, both physically and socially.

There is some evidence to suggest that the character of Sinclair Furley is loosely based on the author George Moore, who was a close friend of Frankau's brother, the musical comedy librettist and founder of the theatre journal *Bats*, James (Jimmy) Davis.⁵⁵ Oscar Wilde was also a close friend of the family and would be twice parodied in Frankau's work despite her sister, the actress Eliza Aria, insisting that his influence was partly responsible for Frankau's venture into writing.⁵⁶ Like Moore, Furley is an Irish realist author (though unlike Moore also an 'entertainer') who has spent time in France among bohemian artists and writers and who upon his return to London is eager to write a story drawn from reality (the character differs most notably in his dark complexion). The novel's conclusion reveals that Furley's virile swaggering is merely posturing, which is revealing as one of Moore's most prominent biographers suggests that '[Moore's] boasting cloaked a condition of sexual impotence'.⁵⁷ Yet this character's consistent attempts to seduce Lucilla may signal something else in Moore's character. One scholar has suggested that Moore wrote extended portions of Frankau's first two novels, a claim most likely taken from Moore's own

55 Elizabeth Eccleshare, 'Frankau [née Davis], Julia [pseud. Frank Danby]' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press Online Edition, 2004) <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/55572> [accessed 8 May 2011]; 'Personal Gossip (From the Star)', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 18 May 1889, p. 5.

56 See p. 38, n30 of the present work. Oscar Wilde is first parodied in a short story published in *The World: A Journal for Men and Women* (1878) and later in *The Sphinx's Lawyer* (1906). See also Aria, p. 15. Frankau's parody of Wilde is considerably less critical than her characterisation of Moore.

57 Malcolm Brown, *George Moore: A Reconsideration* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1955), p. xvi.

(spurious and rather unsurprising, given his reputation for egotism) assertion that this was the case.⁵⁸ This is a contentious claim, however, as Moore and Frankau had a very public altercation in the pages of the *Saturday Review* a number of years later in which Frankau (writing as Frank Danby) denied these assertions.⁵⁹ The published exchange makes clear that while Moore considered himself her mentor (patronisingly referring to her in the first line as his 'pupil' Frank Danby), by this point Frankau found him insufferably meddling.⁶⁰ In *A Babe in Bohemia* the narrator makes several dramatised comments about the writing of the novel and censorship. For instance, when referring to Lucilla's stepmother the narrator comments: 'Nettie was – had been – but never mind Nettie's career; it would fill a volume, and the volume would be interdicted, so the writing would be a waste of time' (8). The comment may be interpreted in several ways: George Moore was forever railing against the 'circulating morals' of the lending libraries that had blacklisted his novels so this may be a straightforward criticism of censorship on his or Frankau's behalf. Reading the novel as a satire of slum fiction, though, we may interpret the comment as a critique of the sensationalist rhetoric of this genre. The introduction to *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London* warns, in italics: '*So far from making the worst of our facts for the purpose of appealing to emotion, we have been compelled to tone down everything*'.⁶¹ The statement strikes the modern reader as disingenuous, given that the pamphlet's objective was to effect social change through emotional affect. A related narrative comment in *A Babe in Bohemia* suggests another reading of the recurring references to self-censorship, particularly as they refer to the caricature of Moore, Sinclair Furley: 'Sinclair Furley sang a song, which he called "The Limelight Litany" – a parody of something they had heard that night, but the words are simply irreproducible in their blasphemous obscenity' (77). The narrator here refers to what Frankau would later describe as the 'inartistic and unnecessary grossness' of

58 Elizabeth Eccleshare, 'Frankau [née Davis], Julia [pseud. Frank Danby]'.

59 See Frank Danby, 'George Moore's New Novel', *Saturday Review*, 27 July 1895, pp. 105-106; George Moore, 'George Moore's New Novel', *Saturday Review*, 3 August 1895, pp. 143; Frank Danby, "Celibates" and Mr George Moore', *Saturday Review*, 10 August 1895, p. 174.

60 Moore, p. 143.

61 Mearns, p. 5.

Moore's work, but the statement also impugns Moore's claim of co-authorship.⁶² Just as Lucilla's independence is threatened by paternalism, the text itself proclaims to suffer from Moore's overbearing and inescapable influence – which Moore understands to be only his generous assistance. With this, Frankau undermines Moore's involvement by satirising him and his self-proclaimed artistic authority. It is perhaps not surprising that their working relationship ended after the publication of this novel. Whereas realism – in the guise of Sinclair Furley – stalks Lucilla to the suburbs and makes certain her suicide, Frankau hereafter distanced herself from Moore's influence and instead worked independently. In a scathing review of Moore's *Celibates* (1895), the article which inspired the debate in the pages of the *Saturday Review*, Frankau states that '[Moore] has a fatuous vanity that prevents him from learning of others, and an absence of humour that prevents him from seeing himself'.⁶³ Although Sinclair Furley's appearance at the suburban house in Twickenham finally compels Lucilla to commit suicide in *A Babe in Bohemia*, the novel makes clear that these issues are more deeply rooted than interpersonal exchanges. The novel's conclusion parodies the hyperbolic tone and dramatic moralising of slum literature while it also relates earnest social criticism. After Lucilla's dramatic death, the narrator asks: 'The one flower that bloomed and faded in this foul soil, died out seedless. But the soil remains. And it will bear bitter fruit. Who will purify the soil?' (348). In rhetoric, the ending is much like Mearns's pamphlet which quotes the biblical phrase 'Whom shall we send and who shall go for us?'.⁶⁴ The novel, however, calls less attention to 'who' than it does to the soil, or the social substructure. The homes of the middle classes – bohemian or suburban, the novel suggests, are just as likely to be materially and morally 'foul' as those found in slum districts; what's more, both are united by social conditions that are perilous to women.

That the dwelling is less important than the foundation on which it is built, interestingly enough, also entered architectural debate in the pages of the *British Architect* during the time at

62 Danby, "‘Celibates’ and Mr George Moore", p. 174.

63 Frank Danby [Julia Frankau], 'Mr George Moore's New Novel', p. 373.

64 Mearns, p. 19.

which *A Babe in Bohemia* was written. Most nineteenth-century middle-class terraced housing was, as suggested earlier in this chapter, built on speculation and often these homes lacked stable foundations. As Lee Jackson has pointed out, it was the dust trade that provided material for the bricks that were used in housing construction – and very often the structurally unsound remains of houses or other buildings that had been demolished provided shallow and insufficient foundations for these homes.⁶⁵ In 'The Relation of Dwellings and Mortality' George Ross notes that

[i]n many new quarters of the metropolis the houses are built on a made soil composed of the filth of the streets and the houses which was shot on the sites when they were waste ground on the account of the expense of carrying the garbage to a distance. Nothing can be worse than this cheap and loathsome practice.⁶⁶

The spectre of the slum districts that haunted many of the new middle-class neighbourhoods was palpable, for the material remains of the slum's buildings contributed to their enduring presence. While the houses constructed at Southampton Row were built on the Duke of Bedford's estate, rather than a slum clearance site, what nevertheless develops in Frankau's novel and literary discourse more broadly at this time is a relationship between the material conditions of the built environment and the city's social and moral condition. *A Babe in Bohemia* reveals concerns about the effects of slum clearance, but also the degree to which governments might propose to legislate behaviour and morality in middle-class districts. In the novel, this concern is united with potential threats to women's physical and intellectual safety; and one of the gravest dangers is the government's 'protection' in a social system that has inequality at its base. *A Babe in Bohemia* contends that moral problems are not only to be found in outcast London, but that middle-class neighbourhoods and their inhabitants are also 'choked with the filth of this universal rottenness' (170). The novel's libertarian argument proposes that any organised attempt to purify the dirt and

65 Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight Against Filth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 11-12.

66 George Ross, 'The Relation of Dwellings and Mortality', *British Architect*, 4.87 (1875), p. 111.

decay could pose as great a threat as the 'rottenness' itself.

'The Pyramid is Rotten at the Top':
The Foundations of Commitment in *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (1905)

The socialist argument of Margaret Harkness's *A City Girl* identifies the model dwellings movement as a strategic solution to the problems of capitalism, rather than a transformative change to the system itself. The cooperative housing scheme referred to at the novel's end fails to answer the question of gender inequality raised by the narrative; it is a question the author would struggle with throughout her career as a socialist, and one which she would return to in the later novel *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (1905). The novel, 'which contains the writer's experiences in the labour movement, and thoughts about it', traces the growth of the British socialist movement during the 1880s through to its apex at the London Dockworkers' Strike in 1889.⁶⁷ It does so by following the experiences of the novel's titular male protagonist, George Eastmont. Yet tellingly, gender and its relationship to political engagement remains on the periphery of this novel. While Beatrice Potter (later Webb) writes that Harkness was personally 'mad with vanity' about her participation in underground political communities, in *George Eastmont, Wanderer* the female socialist character, Mary Cameron, is a marginal and marginalised character who reminds readers of the incompatibilities between socialist ideologies and women's experience: for instance, her romantic friendship with Eastmont is precluded by his belief that the wife of a socialist should be 'a simple, guileless woman, clever about a house, and domestic' (24).⁶⁸ Yet the novel's broader engagement with the disparities between individual identity and collective politics helps to illuminate the relationship between gender and politics in the text beyond the protagonist's infrequent reflections

67 John Law [Margaret Harkness], *George Eastmont, Wanderer* (London: Burns & Oats, 1905), Dedication. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

68 14 November, 1889, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb: Glitter Around and Darkness Within Volume One 1873-1892*, Vol 1, ed. by Norman MacKenzie and Jeanne MacKenzie (London: Virago, 1982), p. 302. While scholars such as Deborah Epstein Nord have suggested that the character Mary Cameron is semi-autobiographical, particularly because like Harkness she is '[b]orn in a country rectory, the only child of poor parents' (49), it is more likely that this character is based on the Australian socialist poet and journalist, Mary Cameron. See Nord, pp. 196-197.

on 'the Woman Question' (219-20). The novel is a *roman à clef* of the early socialist movement in Britain, but privileges the personal history of one of the movement's most socially privileged participants: the 'aristocratic socialist', as John Barnes refers to him, Henry Hyde Champion.⁶⁹ While several scholars have identified Eastmont as a characterisation of Champion, only John Barnes has investigated the degree to which Eastmont's life and experiences correspond to those of Champion.⁷⁰ For instance, while some have interpreted Eastmont's experimental marriage to a woman of the working class as inspired by George Gissing's failed marriages to working-class women, Barnes explains that 'one of the strangest episodes in Champion's life' was his marriage in 1883 to 'twenty-eight year old Juliet Bennett, of whom nothing is known except that she died after less than three years of marriage, one of the few causes being alcoholism from which she had suffered for a "few years"'.⁷¹ In the novel, Eastmont's wife Julia dies shortly after their marriage as a result of a drug overdose which, although accidental, is at least partly the consequence of her husband's insensitivity and negligence. The marriage is motivated mostly by Eastmont's desire to gain credibility in radical working-class circles, and once this is achieved she is rejected by him on account of her social indelicacy and ignorance of political matters. Without the networks of support she had as an unmarried woman, Julia becomes psychologically shackled by self-hatred and confines herself to the living room of their model dwelling. Yet like Arthur Grant in *A City Girl* the representation of Eastmont is not unsympathetic – indeed Barnes suggests it is a character formed by 'someone who admired and even loved him' – yet the novel does not balk from criticising his blinding narcissism or his inability to abandon the prejudices of his upper-class background.⁷² Like his fictional counterpart, Champion 'conceived of leadership more in terms of officers and other

69 John Barnes, 'Gentleman Crusader: Henry Hyde Champion in the Early Socialist Movement', *History Workshop Journal*, 60 (2005), 116-138 (p. 119). The novel refers to Champion as both a socialist and as a member of the labour movement throughout the novel with a nebulosity that reflects their imbrication during the period. In this essay, I refer only to the socialist movement unless specified as Eastmont's participation in the burgeoning independent labour party in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

70 See John Barnes, *Socialist Champion: Portrait of the Gentleman as a Crusader* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2006), pp. 31-2. Barnes suggests that the character Mary Cameron (who he mistakenly refers to as Margaret Cameron) 'reads like a self-portrait' but does not suggest any further evidence for or analysis of this. See also Barnes, 'Gentleman Crusader', pp. 120-122.

71 Barnes, 'Gentleman Crusader', p. 122.

ranks than the democratic ideal of power coming “from below”, and unconsciously assumed that his own role would be that of a “commander”; his inability and unwillingness to compromise his authority 'partly explains his failure as a politician'.⁷³ Therefore fittingly, the novel examines the failures of the early socialist movement more than it celebrates its successes. While it is tempting to read the central character's eventual disengagement from collective politics as the failure of the late nineteenth-century socialist movement itself, such a comparison would be facile and misdirected. The novel does not offer readers the history of a political movement but rather interprets factors motivating intellectual development and personal commitment. In 1889, Harkness spoke to her cousin Beatrice Potter of her dispiriting experience working with the Social Democratic Federation and implied certain personal grievances that she was reluctant to share, but promised she would 'bring it out in a book'.⁷⁴ *George Eastmont, Wanderer*, it seems, is that book; by the point of its publication sixteen years later, Harkness's personal objections were subdued by an evaluation of ideological commitment.

George Eastmont, Wanderer is structurally bipartite, and each part is thematically divergent. The novel's first half follows Eastmont's socialist conversion and political engagement to the climactic moment of the London Dockworkers' Strike of 1889; the latter half traces Eastmont's disengagement from this community and his eventual emigration to Australia. The novel's representation of the conflict between collectivism and individualism is integral to its examination of late nineteenth-century socialism. This ideological opposition was by no means uniquely identified by Harkness, and as such the novel engages in what was an important debate in the socialist community. Stephen Yeo identifies this conflict as a central socialist problematic, and reminds us that Sidney Webb was forced to coax himself into 'self-deadness' in order to subordinate

72 Ibid. See also Barnes, *Socialist Champion*, p. 109. Barnes is not the first to suggest that Harkness was 'possibly more than a friend' to Champion. Ruth Livesey examines and dismisses the epistolary evidence around this claim in *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 58-59.

73 Barnes, p. 120.

74 14 November, 1889, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb: Volume One*, ed. by Norman and Jeanne MacKenzie (London: Virago, 1982), p. 303.

the individual self to the collectivist social whole'.⁷⁵ In writing to Beatrice Potter in 1888, Olive Schreiner comments: 'I was [...] working out what seems to me the reconciliation of Socialism & Individualism. Then I thought you had probably worked it out much more completely yourself'.⁷⁶ An examination of this tension also helps to shed light on Harkness's waning commitment to socialism during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Scholars such as Seth Koven have pointed out that Harkness was 'forever trying on and taking off new religious and political beliefs' in such a way (particularly given the sartorial metaphor of this phrase) that seems to attribute her inconsistency to feminine capriciousness rather than to serious opposition to certain principles of the socialist movement.⁷⁷ In fact, one of the greatest consistencies in Harkness's work is her dedication to documenting women's exclusion from social and political communities. For the remainder of the present chapter, I would like to examine the ways that *George Eastmont, Wanderer* interrogates the relationship between individualism and collectivism in the socialist community by reviewing a similar conflict in the religious community. By engaging with religion, specifically Christianity, the novel participates in a broader cultural discourse during the last two decades of the nineteenth century that associated socialism with religion, particularly the ways it 'presented itself as a certain ground for hope, a convincing analysis of what had gone before, a morally impeccable challenge, and as an organised movement demanding commitment, sacrifice and missionary activity by the newly converted'.⁷⁸ However if socialism adopted the religious community's commitment and compassion, so too did it inherit a social hierarchy that produced internal conflict. Deborah Mutch has examined the ways that British socialist discourses were developed through a re-articulation of established political discourses, especially Tory paternalism, which were constructed and disseminated in serialised fiction such as in Champion's *Labour Elector*.⁷⁹ Given that the

75 Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain', *History Workshop Journal*, 4 (1977), 5-56 (p. 13).

76 Olive Schreiner to Beatrice Webb (nee Potter), April 1888, Passfield Collection, London School of Economics, Olive Schreiner Letters Project transcription, 36-38.

77 Koven, p. 167.

78 Yeo, p. 10.

79 Deborah Mutch, 'Socialist Paternalism: Fathers, Father-Figures and Guidance in Serialised Fiction, 1885-1895'. Paper given at conference, Father Figures: Gender and Paternity in the Modern Age, Liverpool John Moores University, 2003.

discursive paradigms of the early socialist movement were coloured by a religious precedent, I would make the related claim that socialism also builds upon models of religious paternalism in order to construct what Mutch describes as the 'role of the guiding hand'.⁸⁰ In its representation of religious authorities, one an Archbishop of the Church of Rome and another a parish priest of the Church of England, the novel interrogates the contradictions inherent in a theology where individuals might advocate socialist egalitarianism but must also rely upon the authority warranted by its hierarchical organisation. For either Church to earnestly support egalitarian socialism, the novel suggests, would ultimately render Christianity's power impotent. Although *George Eastmont, Wanderer* was published by the religious press Burns & Oats, its representation of religion – like its representation of socialism – is neither plainly advocative nor condemnatory.⁸¹ Rather *George Eastmont, Wanderer* questions whether organised commitment necessarily relies on unequal power relationships – and whether egalitarianism necessarily produces conflict. Most important for the present argument, the novel interrogates the conflict between individualism and collectivism through its representation of the built environment. In what follows, I first examine the novel's representation of Eastmont as a figure of intercession between religion and socialism, and then move on to investigate the ways that while living among 'the People' (5) in the Artizan's Block he becomes an embodiment of the moral authority that motivated the model dwellings movement. In the text, the spiritual paternalism of religion is thus rearticulated in a material and secular paradigm.

I

The internal schisms of the early socialist movement in Britain have been well documented by scholars who helpfully examine the origins and legacies of these divisions, and also their continual repositioning.⁸² Although Harkness had worked (and for a time lived) alongside her cousin Beatrice

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Burns & Oats was best known in the nineteenth century for publishing the work of John Henry Newman and other Tractarians. See Wilfred Wilberforce, *The House of Burns & Oates* (London: Burns & Oates, 1908).

⁸² See for instance Keith Laybourn, *The Rise of Socialism in Britain c. 1881-1951* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997); Stanley Pierson, *British Socialists: The Journey from Fantasy to Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).

Potter during their management of the Katharine Buildings, from this early point Harkness dismissed Potter's commitment to Fabian socialism as merely her 'phantom theory'.⁸³ It is an opinion that Harkness seems to have maintained into the twentieth century, one which she shared with Champion, and one which Eastmont echoes in *George Eastmont, Wanderer*. Although characterised by Eastmont as an 'arm-chair socialist' (41), the novel's sole Fabian advocate – the Reverend Podmore – is represented sympathetically as an 'evolutionist' (47) who shares with Mary Cameron a dedication to faith and patience.⁸⁴ That the novel's representative of Fabianism is a High Church priest is no accident; the text identifies Podmore's religious authority as akin to the paternal ideology that underpins the Fabian belief in the superiority of liberal middle-class culture. Podmore warns Eastmont that his ambition to live among the working classes in order to raise their awareness of their own exploitation is useless: 'But you have no idea how ignorant they are. I've lived amongst them for many years, and I know them, you don't. If you did you would be a Fabian' (41-2). Although Podmore shares many of Eastmont's socialist concerns, his provision of relief for the urban poor relies on his authority among the members of his parish. Perhaps the novel's most important figure of paternalism, however, is the Archbishop Cardinal Lorraine (who is modelled on Cardinal Manning) with whom the novel begins and concludes. Lytton Strachey archly remembers Manning for his participation in 'philanthropic gatherings in Exeter Hall, from strike committees at the docks to Mayfair drawing-rooms' and marvels at his ability to become 'one of the leaders of the procession less through merit rather than through a superior faculty for gliding adroitly through to front ranks'.⁸⁵ The novel indicates that Manning's popularity had as much to do with the people who formed the ranks of the working-class 'procession' as it did with Manning's own personal magnitude. This, however, seems to be the result of their willingness to be wooed and wheedled into passivity by figures of authority more than their capacity to nominate leaders. Manning shares

83 24 November, 1883, *The Diary of Beatrice Webb*, p. 80.

84 The character is based partly on Frank Podmore, who was a founding member of the Fabian Society. In the novel, his interest in Spiritualism and Mesmerism is translated into a more conventional devotion to the Established Church.

85 Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (New York: Garden City, 1918), p. 4.

Podmore's belief in Christian charity but is firm that radical activism will only 'inflame the masses, but lead to nothing' and asserts that '[t]here is much hardship and distress [...] but English working men will never join Socialists' (8). Although Eastmont is discouraged by both Podmore and Manning, his political conviction inspires him to cast off the paternalism espoused by religion and middle-class socialism and live among 'the People' (5). While the use of religious discourse to describe a person's conversion to socialism was often used in the late nineteenth century, most often to identify the ways in which it follows the pattern of the conversion narrative, here it takes on a dual significance: it makes plain the novel's connection between religious and political conviction, but also establishes Eastmont as a christlike figure. What socialism inherits from religious paternalism is conceived of in the novel not strictly as a reiteration of this authority, but one through which Eastmont realises his own material and corporal limitations.

The increasing tendency towards paternalist intervention from the state during the nineteenth century, according to David Roberts, 'formed a parallel to the paternalism of property and the church'.⁸⁶ This trinity – property, religion and government – weaves a complex web throughout the novel that makes apparent the ways that each one of these three aspects contends with conflicts between individualism and collectivism. When Eastmont renounces his own position of privilege in favour of living in an Aritzan's Block with members of the skilled working class, he resigns individual ambition for the purpose of the collective; but in doing so, also aggrandises his own position. After spending a night sleeping in a doss-house Eastmont decides to 'cut [himself] off for ever from the classes that fatten on the miseries of the poor' (7). However his proposed sacrifice on behalf of the poor is diminished by his sense of self-importance: 'A Saviour of the masses was wanted, someone who would go amongst them and show them how to help themselves, rouse them out of their apathy and ignorance, and give them hope. Where was the man?' (15). The novel does not forge Eastmont into a christlike figure so much as it documents the process by which he nominates *himself* as 'saviour of the masses' (15). When finally 'the day of reckoning is at hand'

⁸⁶ David Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 188.

(17), Eastmont decides to sacrifice himself and 'go down among the People', for as his friend Charleston explains, 'they would listen [to him] as they will not listen to one of themselves' (19). The narrative first constructs Eastmont as a figure whose ambitions embody the conflict between individualism and collectivism; it then places him in an environment that renders materially visible this problem: the communal residences of the Artizan's Block.

II

The agenda of religion, government and property under nineteenth-century paternalist ideology involved 'defending and disciplining its subjects'.⁸⁷ The novel combines the paternalism of both government and property in its representation of one of London's earliest housing schemes initiated by a public authority. Unlike many of Harkness's other novels, which provide detail enough for residences to be easily matched with their historic counterparts, *George Eastmont, Wanderer* does not specify either the full name or the location of the Artizan's Block other than to mention it is in 'the City' (26) and that Eastmont's route home one evening takes him past St. Paul's Cathedral. Yet even from this limited information, it is very likely that the building is modelled on the Artizan's Blocks at Golden Lane and Petticoat Square built by the City of London Corporation. Only three schemes were constructed in the City during the 1880s and were built by the Corporation itself, ostensibly in order to rehouse residents displaced by slum clearance earlier in the century: the Tower Bridge Buildings, the Viaduct Buildings, and the buildings at Middlesex Street (Petticoat Square and Golden Lane).⁸⁸ Both the location and the formal detail of the building described in the novel most closely match the five blocks constructed at Middlesex Street, which were referred to during the period as simply the 'Artizan's Block' or 'Corporation buildings', which partly explains Harkness's uncharacteristic imprecision.⁸⁹ Originally on the site at Stoney Lane off Middlesex Street

⁸⁷ Roberts, p. 188.

⁸⁸ The City of London Corporation had also constructed one building 'voluntarily' (meaning not out of the necessity to rehouse local populations) at Farringdon Road in 1865. See W. Thompson, *Housing Up-to-Date* (London: National Housing Reform Council, 1907), p. 81.

⁸⁹ Thompson, p. 81.

stood the notorious slum Angel Court, 'housing a population so bad no policeman could go alone among them at night, on an area so unhealthy as to be a disgrace'.⁹⁰ Although the site was cleared between 1877 and 1879 by the City Corporation under the Artisans' and Labourers' Act, the improvement scheme had displaced 1783 people. The Select Committee required that new dwellings house at least the same number of people who had been evicted from the site, a nearly impossible task given the overcrowding in most slums.⁹¹ This difficulty was further complicated by the high value of the land, which left the Corporation unable to secure a tender for the site except at a tremendous loss.⁹² Eventually the City was able to amend the bill so that half the number of people could be rehoused on the site, and the remaining number could be rehoused at 'some reasonable and suitable distance'.⁹³ In 1884, the City of London Artizans' Dwellings Corporation constructed five separate parallel blocks with accommodation for 937 persons – roughly half the number evicted supposing, as the *British Architect* points out, 'one person slept on the ground-floor of the tradesmen's premises'.⁹⁴ In this sense the Boundary Estate, the LCC's first social housing development which was opened in 1900, was preceded by social housing constructed by the City of London (which predated the creation of London's local councils).

In *The London Programme* Sidney Webb notes that by 1888 the majority of flats had been let and 923 persons were in occupation, but '[n]o other public authority in London has yet erected any dwellings'.⁹⁵ Like the model dwellings built by philanthropic corporations such as the Peabody Fund or the Guinness Trust, those built by the City of London Corporation were for the 'aristocracy' of London's working classes.⁹⁶ It is the Artizan's Block into which Eastmont moves with his wife, who is herself a socialist 'experiment' (16), the choice of which suggests his naivety as even this

90 W. St. John Broderick, 'The Homes of the Poor', *Fortnightly Review*, October 1882, pp. 420-431 (p. 426).

91 Paul S. Cassan, 'London Evictions', *Macmillan's Magazine*, October 1882, pp. 498-504 (p. 502).

92 Ibid.

93 The amendment suggested that this reasonable distance included 'facilities for transit by railway, boat, or tramway be taken into consideration in determining reasonable and suitable distance'. This amendment allowed for the rehousing of large portions of the working classes in London's suburbs, not always successfully, during the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century. See Cassan, 'London Evictions,' pp. 502-503.

94 'Petticoat Square', *British Architect*, 23 November 1883, p. 242. See also Thompson, p. 81.

95 Sidney Webb, *The London Programme* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1891), p. 128.

96 Wohl, p. 156.

'aristocratic' building is to him utterly unliveable. Eastmont's inability to adapt to his surroundings also suggests the hypocrisy of those who demanded that the working classes change attitudes and behaviour upon moving into the model dwellings in order to fit in with middle-class notions of propriety. Eastmont's time living in the buildings makes apparent his class prejudice, and also indicates his inability to sacrifice his individuality on behalf of the socialist community. Webb points out that the 'ideal three rooms and a scullery [...] should be [the] goal' in providing accommodation.⁹⁷ In the novel, although 'the other men [think] his home too luxurious' (30), Eastmont finds the 'dreary little room[s]' (32) in the Artizan's Block unbearable:

[H]e reached the Artizan's Block in which he lived. He paid seven shillings and sixpence a week for three rooms in it, sitting-room, bedroom, and kitchen. It was a tall, ungainly structure, built of red brick; and round it was an asphalt path. (26)

Despite his relentless socialist rhetoric, Eastmont's prejudices are intractable. Although his environment fills him with 'disgust and annoyance', he consoles himself by turning his imagination to the '[o]ne who had been meek and lowly, sitting on an ass [...] and the common people followed him' (39). Eastmont unsuccessfully attempts to gain the trust of those who live in the building by appointing himself moral authority of the Artizan's Block. To his disappointment, his wife and the other inhabitants refuse to be influenced either by their well-appointed surroundings or Eastmont's exhortations: 'Having lived all his life amongst people who make eating a fine art, he found Julia's gymnastics with her knife and fork rather a trial to his appetite. [...] [H]e had hoped that Julia would drop the peculiarities she shared with the People, and copy him when they were married' (25). While Eastmont is in prison, having sacrificed himself for 'the People' (5) during the Trafalgar Square Riots, his wife dies of a drug overdose: a habit she develops partly on account of his clear disdain and general indifference toward her. Eastmont's hostility towards his wife is partly the result of his inability to resign his domination of the domestic environment: "What's thine is mine, and

⁹⁷ Webb, p. 128.

what's mine is my own", is the creed of most husbands; but he had carried communism into his domestic life, with the result that only his writing-table and letters remained his private property; nothing else was safe from his wife's encroachments' (33). The sentence makes use of religious language to convey the ways Eastmont expects his wife's submission – the 'creed of most husbands' – and exposes the resentment that persists despite his 'communistic' domestic ambitions.

The model dwellings movement aimed to provide the skilled working classes with improved accommodation, but the moral project that initiated the movement was governed by and sought to reinforce middle-class behaviours and values. The improvement schemes enacted and the residential buildings constructed in response to London's slum clearance had, according to Martin Gaskell, 'a dimension beyond architectural creativity, patronage and philanthropic endeavour: that dimension was didactic'.⁹⁸ That the model dwellings were designed to influence behaviour and effect moral improvement through design is clear. The Artizan's Block at Petticoat Lane operated on the principle of 'associated flats', with shared communal facilities. For the other inhabitants of the Artizan's Block the associated facilities are no terrible compromise, but Eastmont resents 'liv[ing] without a bathroom' (29). Just as Eastmont's authority in his own domestic space is compromised by his wife's 'encroachments' (33), he is similarly unable to gain influence in the Artizan's Block owing to his supercilious behaviour. Eastmont scoffs at the 'dirty children [...] on the staircase, rolling over one another and talking cockney gibberish', and recoils from an 'untidy woman on her way back from the market' (26). The man who claims that his 'heart is full of sorrow for the People' (31) looks upon those same people as 'dirty' and 'untidy', and derides their dialect as utterly meaningless and unintelligible.

Although 'bitter complaints' had been made across the social spectrum about the ways that model dwellings were not designed to give relief to the poor, but rather to reward the upwardly mobile working classes who had regular employment as '[g]overnment employe[es] – policemen, postmen', Eastmont conflates the Artizan's Block in which he lives with the dingy quarters of the

⁹⁸ S. Martin Gaskell, *Model Housing* (London: Mansell, 1987), p. 3.

'Doss-House' (7).⁹⁹ On several occasions Eastmont refers to the Artizan's Block as 'the great beehive' (60). The phrase is significant both architecturally and socially. The term 'beehive house' refers to Britain's 'ancient dwellings' used by agricultural labourers in Ireland and Scotland, and therefore in the novel refers obliquely to notions of uncivilized poverty.¹⁰⁰ During the late nineteenth century the phrase 'beehive' was also associated architecturally with Rowton Houses. Although the first Rowton House was not completed until 1892 (and therefore after the period represented in the novel), by the time of the publication of George Eastmont, *Wanderer* in 1905 the Rowton House had been memorably described as the 'Monster Doss-House' in Jack London's *People of the Abyss* (1902).¹⁰¹ Initiated by the philanthropist Lord Rowton, the houses were designed to provide temporary low-cost accommodation for working-class men. Rowton Houses were notably safer and cleaner than London's other lodging houses, and the residents were given clean sheets, the use of tiled washrooms with hot water and a splash bath, and access to a dining room and library for 6d a night.¹⁰² However sleeping accommodation was arranged in rows of cubicles, for which reason the buildings received the appellation 'the beehive'.¹⁰³ While Rowton Houses would have provided many working-class men with comfortable, safe and clean accommodation, the status of these buildings was well below that of the respectable artisan's dwellings provided by the City. The connection between society and the beehive, which was styled in the seventeenth century as a 'great Bee-hive of Christendom [...] [which] swarmes foure times in a yeare, with people of al Ages, Natures, Sexes, Callings', by the nineteenth century became a well-regulated and efficient social structure.¹⁰⁴ George Cruikshank's popular satirical etching 'The British Beehive' (Figure 3) structures the country's social classes into a consolidated hierarchical order with

99 Webb, p. 129.

100 'Beehive Houses', *The Leisure Hour*, 22 May 1880, pp. 328-330 (p. 328).

101 Jack London, *People of the Abyss* (London: Macmillan, 1903), p. 245. This edition contains an image of the Rowton House; opposite is an image of the 'Working-Men's Homes Near Middlesex Street'. The Rowton Houses would later be written about somewhat more favourably by George Orwell in *Down and Out in Paris and London* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933).

102 Michael Sheridan, *Rowton Houses 1892-1954* (London: Rowton Houses Ltd., 1956), pp. 9-28.

103 Ibid., p. 26.

104 Donald Lupton, *London and the Countrey Carbonadoed* (London, n.p., 1632; Republished 1977), p. 267.



Figure 3: George Cruikshank, 'The British Bee Hive', Etching (designed 1840; published 1867).

Source: V&A Prints and Drawings, 9779A/4.

the unskilled trades at its base (above the foundation of institutions like the Bank and the Navy) and the Queen appropriately at its crown. The Artizan's Block paradoxically embodies both representations of the beehive: the hierarchical and the chaotic. The prescriptive design of the building architecturally represents the social hierarchy of broader society. It privileges those middle-class morals and behaviours which it hopes to effect, and in doing so attempts to coax its inhabitants towards middle-class lifestyles and family homes in the suburbs (to which many of the urban artisan classes would eventually move). In practice, however, the novel suggests that the building is chaotic and refuses to order itself along the principles imposed by the 'moral tradition' that inspired the model dwellings movement.¹⁰⁵ Unable to assert his moral authority and personal gravitas over the inhabitants of the Artizan's Block, Eastmont questions the effectiveness of the building's design:

Who can live by rule in a place to which tradesmen pay slovenly visits, where they drop milk and eggs on the staircase, leave the wrong meat, and say: 'You can get the things yourself, if you're not satisfied!' The water-taps were constantly out of order, the gas burnt badly, and the former inhabitants of the tenement had left behind them a legacy in the cracks of the walls and floors. To Eastmont's surprise his wife accepted these things with indifference, and smiled when he talked of fumigation, fresh plaster and new wall paper.

'It would be all the same in a fortnight,' she told him. (34)

Eastmont means to govern by the 'rule' of his own moral authority and that of those whose philanthropic project gave rise to the construction of model housing; however this 'rule' is born of the same prejudices that produce his total loathing of the buildings and its inhabitants. Yet Eastmont's efforts to improve the Artizan's Block and the behaviour of people who live in it only demonstrates the flaws central to his hierarchical system: imbued with the authority of one who presumes to know better, Eastmont is unwilling – and unable – to compromise. Although Eastmont suggests that new facilities like gas and water would allow for rule and order, augmented by 'fresh

¹⁰⁵ Gaskell, p. 4.

plaster and new wallpaper' (likely a satirical stroke at Octavia Hill's housing management), neither Eastmont himself nor the building have proved to be effective models of influencing behaviour. After his wife's death and his growing inability to tolerate 'the discomfort of the life to which he had pledged himself' (30), Eastmont decides to abandon his residential experiment. Eastmont's experience of the Artizan's Block illustrates the difficulty of reconciling individual authority with socialist commitment.

Although Eastmont identifies the paradox between individualism and collectivism when he reflects 'Did he not aspire to be saviour of the masses? And was not that a form of ambition?' (32), he is unable to achieve – at least materially – the 'temporary denial of the divide between structure and personal life in socialist consciousness' that Yeo suggests was characteristic of socialist commitment during this period.¹⁰⁶ Eastmont's experiment of living in the Artizan's Block is important because his inability to materially overcome this divide anticipates his discouraging experience of political action during the London Dockworkers' Strike. While the Strike provided a 'cathartic release from the social tension of the mid 1880s', it also produced social divisions among the working classes and between members of the socialist movement. Gareth Stedman Jones notes that the dock strike was a 'means toward decasualization which would enforce the separation of the "respectable" working class from the residuum, the fit from the unfit'.¹⁰⁷ In an article written for *The New Review* in 1891, Harkness also comments that the Dock Strike elevated the status of dock workers to respectable labourers – but that important status divisions remained between the workers who were represented by trade unions and the 'scum of our population that haunts the slums of our great cities'.¹⁰⁸ In *George Eastmont, Wanderer*, the Dockworkers' Strike fragments the 'little band of socialists' (162) and creates a division between those who unreservedly support trades unionism, and those who believed unionism ignored the poorest of society and compromised the more

¹⁰⁶ Yeo, p. 14.

¹⁰⁷ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: a Study of the Relationship between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971; Republished London: Verso, 2013), p. 317.

¹⁰⁸ John Law [Margaret Harkness], 'A Year of My Life', *New Review*, 5.29 (1891), pp. 375-384 (p. 377).

immediate necessity of securing representation in parliament.

If historically the Dockworkers' Strike was politically cathartic, as Stedman Jones suggests, in the novel it is the notional climax of the conversion narrative (what Edmund Morgan would refer to in his morphology of conversion as the 'combat' phase) – but it is one which delivers not assurance, but intense doubt.¹⁰⁹ The divisions among the socialist movement discourage Eastmont's commitment to collective politics; equally, he interprets the Strike as not having been won by his own command or the will of the people, but spiritual authority: Cardinal Lorraine descends in the manner of a *deus ex machina* in order to resolve the conflict. Although the Cardinal 'stood before them a citizen like themselves' (149) his apostolic authority influences the strikers and the directors '[t]he greater number of [whom] were Catholics [...] [and who] told their wives afterwards, that while he talked they saw a halo of light round his head, and his face seemed to shine like the face of an angel' (150). In an article in which Harkness reflects on the strike, she suggests that the greatest lesson she learned from experience was that 'it is almost useless and sometimes dangerous to represent people whose demands have not been made clear by themselves'.¹¹⁰ While the novel does not pretend to resolve the conflict between individualism and collectivism – nor indeed does it suggest it is a problem in need of solving – it does indicate that a freedom from dogmatic ideological commitment is the only way in which to avoid traps that render social change impotent. In this sense, Eastmont's decision to abandon the British socialist movement in favour of independently investigating the Land Question in Australia should not be interpreted as his defeat, but instead as his realisation that his engagement in socialism relied too heavily on ideological coercion. Eastmont's 'mental history had been one of continual development' (21), and as such he resolves to match this development physically by committing himself to geographical wandering.

One important question that remains to be addressed, however, is my earlier claim that the novel's consideration of individual identity and political commitment serves to shed some light on

109 Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: the History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 72.

110 Law [Harkness], 'A Year of My Life', p. 377.

the obscure ways in which gender operates in the text. While the text 'demonstrates the collapse of collectivity into individualism', it places the revaluation of ideological commitment within a broader repositioning of social experience: Eastmont's 'wander[ing]'.¹¹¹ The novel acknowledges the ways that an individual's intellectual experience is continually formed (and reformed) by responses to other individuals, social groups, and material environments, and is therefore by definition variable. In one of the best accounts of Harkness's life and work to date, Lynne Hapgood observes that while 'pursuing the ideological struggle for social justice with the socialist self [...] [Harkness struggled] to find a role within that framework for the female self'.¹¹² The task, as *George Eastmont, Wanderer* confirms thematically and structurally, was well-nigh impossible. The novel's conclusion identifies the difficulties of fitting one ideology into the framework of another. At the novel's conclusion Eastmont receives a letter from Podmore in which he explains: 'the Woman Question I no longer look upon as a side issue, for I have learnt how fatal the ignorance of women is to the Labour Movement' (219-20). Although perhaps dubious in its evaluation of women's political 'usefulness', it identifies that the failures of political action can be attributed in part to the inflexibility of ideology: the 'framework' that could not accommodate the female self, to which Hapgood refers. The question of gender that remains a 'side issue' in the novel, and which was a marginal concern of the nineteenth-century socialist movement, would eventually gain from – and give much to – a more vital engagement with political questions.

'Between Antique Perfection and Modern Character':
Housing and Social Liberalism in Mary Ward's *Marcella* (1894)

After achieving extraordinary success with the best-selling *Robert Elsmere* (1888), a novel that follows a clergyman's crisis of faith, Mary Ward set to write a story 'concerned not with theology,

¹¹¹ Lynne Hapgood, 'Is this Friendship?': Eleanor Marx, Margaret Harkness and the Idea of Socialist Community, in *Eleanor Marx (1855-1898): Life, Work, Contacts*, ed. by John Stokes (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 129-143 (p. 141).

¹¹² Hapgood, p. 135.

but social ethics'.¹¹³ Yet the novel that followed, *Marcella* (1894), shares with *Robert Elsmere* a structure that traces the protagonist's intellectual development in the context of late nineteenth-century social and political changes. Both novels are also variations of the conversion narrative, but unlike Harkness's *George Eastmont, Wanderer*, do not dramatise the acquisition of a particular conviction but instead explore the material and psychological implications of maintaining that conviction. While *Marcella* foregrounds the emergence of British socialism at the end of the nineteenth century, its impulse is intellectual more than it is ideological; it is not, as one reviewer claimed, 'a sugar-coated pamphlet', but instead examines the effect of political debate on the protagonist's emotional and intellectual development.¹¹⁴ For this reason the novel has been considered a *bildungsroman*, one that Anne Bindslev points out is necessarily unconventional given its treatment of a woman's reconciliation of the self with society in a genre that was 'almost exclusively a male prerogative'.¹¹⁵ *Marcella* has been compared with both Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872), particularly in its treatment of the maturation of the protagonists's moral conscience. However Ward's novel uniquely centres this development within contemporary political and legislative discourse.¹¹⁶ The novel follows the political engagement and social commitment of the young heroine, Marcella Boyce, from her early interest in socialism, through to her engagement with legal lobbying and social support, then to a career in district nursing, and finally, to marriage. This conventional ending has been variously interpreted; but whether it marks the heroine 'affronting, but finally accepting, her destiny' as Collister argues, or is instead the 'balancing act' that Sutton-Ramspeck suggests, it is significant that marriage is among this procession of political experiences: marriage, the novel suggests, is as political as it is

113 Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs Humphrey Ward* (London: Nisbet, 1917), p. 42.

114 'Novel Notes', *Bookman*, November 1896, p. 49.

115 Anne M. Bindslev, *Mrs Humphry Ward: A Study in Late-Victorian Feminine Consciousness and Creative Expression* (Almqvist & Wiskell: Stockholm, 1985), p. 55.

116 See Gisela Argyle, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's Experiments in the Woman Question', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 43.4 (2003), 939-957. Argyle also points out that Ward's 'cosmopolitan' introductions to the Haworth Edition of the Brontë novels are worth considering (p. 942). See also Peter Collister, 'Portraits of "Audacious Youth"', *English Studies*, 4 (1983), 296-317.

intimate.¹¹⁷ It is remarkable, given this novel's commitment to examining the patterns of its protagonists's cognition and tracing the processes of her ideological deliberation, that it has not been interpreted as a narrative exercise in nineteenth-century political liberalism. By the mid-Victorian period liberalism was, as Elaine Hadley explains, the 'fashionable form of opinion'.¹¹⁸ Contemplative thought was, in fact, the principal form of political activity for the liberal subject. To engage in the processes of reflection, deliberation and abstraction produced liberal ideas, which then entered the public domain of political opinion.¹¹⁹ This process of reflection and deliberation, or 'liberal cognition' as Hadley refers to it, is one that gives to *Marcella* its subject and its structure. In this section, I explore the ways that Ward's novel gives substance to this process of liberal cognition by following the development of the protagonist's political convictions. As Hadley remarks, nineteenth-century political liberalism was preoccupied with *how* one ought to think, but not precisely what to think.¹²⁰ In *Marcella*, Ward is concerned with writing into fiction the process by which a reader might be coached into practicing liberal cognition. I am interested in the ways that Ward's novel uses domestic architecture to represent the processes of private liberal cognition materially and in so doing encourage in her readership the practice of liberal habits of thought.

Although Ward's reputation as a fusty Victorian holds fast, due in part to her association with the anti-suffrage movement – and certainly not helped by Lytton Strachey's uncomfortable characterisation of her as 'that shapeless mass of meaningless flesh' – recent scholarship has contested this designation through careful readings of her work and a reconsideration of her personal politics.¹²¹ In particular, Beth Sutton-Ramspeck argues that a misreading of feminist politics at the turn of the century has led scholars to 'distort and oversimplify the culture and gender

117 Collister, p. 297; Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, 'Mary Ward and the Claims of Conflicting Feminism', in *Victorian Women Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicole Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 204-222 (p. 206).

118 Elaine Hadley, *Living Liberalism: Practical Citizenship in Mid-Victorian Britain* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010), p. 1.

119 Hadley, pp. 8-9.

120 Hadley, p. 10.

121 Michael Holroyd, *Lytton Strachey: A Critical Biography*, Vol 1 (London: Heinemann, 1967), p. 443.

politics of [Ward's] time'.¹²² More recently, Emily Coit has intelligently reconsidered the ways that Ward's anti-suffragism was not inconsistent with her feminism, a version of which she explains is 'no longer easily legible as such'.¹²³ Coit focuses on the ways that *Marcella* is an expression of Ward's difference feminism in its staging of a 'comparison between gendered varieties of economic knowledge'.¹²⁴ Given this precedent, I am less interested in recuperating Ward's reputation than I am in reading *Marcella* as a text that attentively documents late nineteenth-century political changes and the ways that women's lives were necessarily implicated into these social shifts. While employed as a district nurse on the fringes of Bloomsbury, Marcella takes residence in a complex of recently completed model dwellings. The Brown's Buildings, or Peabody Buildings as they are referred to in the original manuscript, play an important role in the text structurally and metaphorically.¹²⁵ Marcella's flat in the model dwellings provides her with an independent space where she can engage in self-reflexive thought and political deliberation, a space away from the overbearing influence of others.

Like the other novels considered in this chapter, *Marcella* engages with late nineteenth-century public debate about government intervention in personal welfare. As Bindslev points out, the novel seems to advocate that 'the state ideally assumes increasing responsibility, but not at the expense of individual charity'.¹²⁶ The negotiation between state responsibility and individual charity is one that is mirrored in the novel by the process in which private liberal cognition becomes public opinion, and thereby enters into broader political debate. I would also argue that it is no accident that this novel, in which Ward engages with the processes of liberal free thought, is also a novel that features a young, independent and politically-spirited woman. Matthew Arnold's political essays *Culture and Anarchy* (1867-8) engage with the ways that the nation's collective culture

122 Sutton-Ramspeck, p. 218.

123 Emily Coit, 'Mary Augusta Ward's "Perfect Economist" and the Logic of Anti-Suffragism', *English Literary History*, 82.4 (2015), 1213-1238 (p. 1213).

124 Coit, p. 1214.

125 Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole B. Meller eds., *Marcella* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2002), p. 349, n.1. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

126 Bindslev, p. 27.

might change in response to increasing enfranchisement, and I would argue that Ward's task is related in *Marcella*.¹²⁷ Aware of women's demands for political rights and social freedoms, and concerned with the consequences of women's participation in politics without having been sufficiently educated or trained in the liberal qualities of reason and reflection, this novel represents Ward's attempt to coach her readership into performing the acts of liberal cognition that would enable them to make (what Ward would have considered) sound judgments about political matters. Liberalism's 'trademark diversity of opinion', Hadley notes, was 'best brought under control by a formalised narrative of mental development'.¹²⁸ In *Marcella*, Ward represents the heroine's disinterested 'free play of the mind', but she also ensures that such deliberation returns at the novel's conclusion to the privileging of abstract liberal thought.¹²⁹

I

Several scholars have interpreted *Marcella* as expressive of conflicting ideologies, which Ward epigrammatically describes as 'the clash of old and new'.¹³⁰ While the novel does indeed explore the contention between conservatism and liberalism, tradition and transformation, and most palpably between the rich and the poor, criticism has been too eager to interpret this conflict as reconciled only through victory and defeat. Such a reading is no doubt inspired by the novel's romantic plot which follows the division of Marcella's interest and affection between two men who are political antagonists. Although early in the novel Marcella accepts a marriage proposal from Aldous Raeburn, a dyed-in-the-wool Tory who is heir to the neighbouring estate, she rescinds out of uncertainty; it is uncertainty, however, that is in part motivated by her friendship with the radical

127 Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. by J. Dover Wilson (London: Cambridge University Press, 1932), p. xxiii-xxiv. This edition wants in political sensitivity, particularly in its suggestion that Arnold was wise to fear the 'advent of this "vast residuum" to political power' (xxiv). More recent editions of this text, such as Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), also acknowledge Arnold's engagement with the emergence of democracy (xii-xv) but comment on this with a more nuanced understanding of working-class intellectual life.

128 Hadley, p. 27.

129 Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Culture and Anarchy and Other Writings*, ed. by Stefan Collini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 26-51 (p. 35).

130 See Collister, p. 306-7 and Sutton-Ramspeck, p. 220. For Ward's evaluation, see Mrs Humphry [Mary] Ward, 'Introduction to the Westmoreland edition', in *Marcella*, Vol 1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p. v.

politician Harry Wharton. When after considerable soul-searching Marcella returns (on her knees, no less) to Raeburn the novel certainly seems to trumpet the triumph of conservatism. While this narrative is irrepressible, it is also, I think, reductive. Marcella's independence and experience are not subsumed by her return to Raeburn at the novel's conclusion; it is these very qualities that make her decision possible (after all, it is she who proposes). If Mellor, Marcella's ancestral home, represents an agrarian social model that is organised on a traditional and hierarchical structure, the working-class Brown's Buildings materialise the social complexities of nineteenth-century industrial society. Marcella's return to Mellor at the novel's end does not make the Brown's Buildings any less significant or the narrative regressive. Instead, Marcella's intellectual development knits together the combined significance of both forms of housing, and her experience of living in these spaces provides a material exemplum of self-reflection and political deliberation.

In 'The Virtues of Architecture' John Ruskin theorises the relationship between individual morality and the built environment, and suggests that 'in no art is there closer connection between our delight in the work, and our admiration of the workman's mind, than in architecture'.¹³¹ While Ruskin's evaluation of delight in architectural virtue is firmly rooted in Christian morality, the connection is otherwise important because it foregrounds the relationship between architectural design and emotional affect. For Ruskin, this affect forges an emotional connection between individuals who engage with the structure in contemplation, and is conceived of and perceived in two separate qualities: action and aspect.¹³² These two qualities broadly refer to a building's formal construction, and its invention (or decoration), both of which are necessary in order for a structure to be virtuous. While these two qualities enable a building to 'act well' and to 'look well', a building must also 'speak well'.¹³³ Ruskin acknowledges that this final quality is not essential but rather *existential*; each conventional (as opposed to natural) expression 'has its own alphabet'.¹³⁴ In this

131 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol 1 (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1875), p. 42.

132 Ruskin, p. 41.

133 Ibid.

134 Ibid., p. 40.

sense, Ruskin imagines architecture's method of communication as linguistic: successful unity between these complimentary contraries – action and aspect – give a building the capacity to communicate. In *Marcella*, the representation of housing is communicative, both to the characters within the text and also to the reader, and as such the novel itself becomes that which 'speaks well'. In *Marcella*, it is the narrative's communication (rather than its conclusion or resolution) that is significant: communication between radical and conservative; rich and poor; tradition and transformation; the individual and the community. Like liberal opinion that enters the public domain after a period of reflection and deliberation, a building's capacity for communication is only possible after balancing action and aspect. What is important about Ruskin's work for *Marcella* is not a question of influence, but of contemporary understandings of the relationship between architecture and social progress, and how this informs a reading of the ways that domestic architecture is connected to a re-imagining of women's role in the political sphere. Still, it is relevant that Ward *was* familiar with Ruskin's work. In fact, she writes that until her family moved to Oxford in 1867 (the year her uncle Matthew Arnold was elected Professor of Poetry at Keble College) 'Ruskin – *The Stones of Venice* and certain chapters in *Modern Painters* – had been my chief intellectual passion'.¹³⁵ Although Ward writes that while at school she had learned 'nothing thoroughly or accurately', she nevertheless recalls 'the haunting beauty of certain passages of Ruskin which I copied out and carried about with me'.¹³⁶ It is interesting, then, that scholars refer almost exclusively to 'Of Queen's Gardens' from *Sesames and Lilies* (1864) in identifying Ruskinian ideas in Ward's work. For instance, Bindslev suggests that there is a tension in *Marcella* between the 'Ruskinian ideal of womanly submission and the social ideal of equality'.¹³⁷ Furthermore she suggests that *Marcella*'s return to Raeburn at the novel's conclusion underscores the text's (and the author's) argument that 'yielding to the control of the husband is the order of

135 Mrs Humphry [Mary Augusta] Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, Vol 1 (New York and London: Harper, 1918), p. 77.

136 Ibid., p. 133.

137 Bindslev, p. 22. See also Argyle, p. 944; p. 948.

nature'.¹³⁸ This interpretation of the novel, at a time when 'Of Queen's Gardens' was the most conspicuous elaboration of the nineteenth-century paradigm of separate spheres due to Kate Millet's examination of the text in *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age* (1972), is of course still valid; but it is perhaps altogether too easy given Ward's notorious reputation as an anti-feminist and her appointment as the first president of the Anti-Suffrage League in 1908.¹³⁹ In fact, in *Robert Elsmere* Ruskin's social theories are acknowledged to be outmoded (if not irrelevant) by a character who explains: '[I]n my youth people talked about Ruskin; now they talk about drains'.¹⁴⁰ The quip is charged with an awareness of the development of social reform in the latter half of the nineteenth century – from moral idealism to practical socialism – and reappears in the pages of *Marcella*. When describing Marcella in a letter to his childhood friend Hallin, a character modelled on Arthur Toynbee, Raeburn writes:

She may be twenty, or rather more. The mind has all sorts of ability; comes to the right conclusion by a divine instinct, ignoring the how and why. What does such a being want with the drudgery of learning? to such keenness life will be master enough. Yet she has evidently read a good deal – much poetry, some scattered political economy, some modern socialistic books, Matthew Arnold, Ruskin, Carlyle. (91)

Like the author herself, Marcella has read broadly (Ruskin included) if not thoroughly, but in the novel this owes less to a restricted education than it does to her 'ability' and 'keenness'.¹⁴¹ The narrator comments that 'at twenty-one people who take interest in many things, and are in a hurry to have opinions, must skim and "turn over" books rather than read them, must use indeed as best they may a scattered and distracted mind' (41). More interesting, though, is Raeburn's assessment that Marcella reaches the conclusion while 'ignoring the how and the why', for the novel demonstrates the development of Marcella's intellect to the point that political affinities are swayed by practical

¹³⁸ Bindslev, p. 44.

¹³⁹ Kate Millett, 'The Debate Over Women: Ruskin vs. Mill', in *Suffer and be Still: Women in the Victorian Age*, ed. by Martha Vicinus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p. 121-139.

¹⁴⁰ Mrs Humphry [Mary Augusta] Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888), p. 170.

¹⁴¹ For a discussion of the similarities between Marcella's childhood and Ward's own, see Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole B. Meller, 'Introduction', in Mary Augusta Ward, *Marcella* (Peterborough: Broadview, 2002), pp. 11-27 (p. 12).

consideration rather than idealism. The novel does not recapitulate but rather reappraises Ruskin's moral idealism; and its conclusion moves beyond the ideologies of either 'Of Queen's Gardens' or 'The Virtues of Architecture'.

II

The novel's opening initiates Marcella's relocation from a student boarding house in South Kensington to the family home of Mellor Park, an ancestral property unexpectedly inherited by her father upon her uncle's death. The initial move lays the foundations of Marcella's intellectual progress throughout the novel, and its relationship to the built environment. The move to Mellor Park the narrator refers to as a 'sequel, or second volume' (50), and it is this second volume that opens the novel. After this initial relocation Marcella begins to attend socialist meetings, organises campaigns, and eventually returns to London where she becomes a district nurse. The contrast between these 'volumes' is first articulated in Marcella's 'passionate pleasure by a first sight of the wide lawns and time-stained front' (49) that contrasts with the city's density and modernity. The time-stained front, however, is not characterised by the stylistic consistency that is typically granted to nineteenth-century representations of grand country homes. That is not to say that the house falls into the predictable pattern of picturesque gothic that characterises so many domestic buildings in fiction after the gothic revival of mid-century. While gothic castles and monasteries made regular appearances as residences with the emergence of gothic fiction, by the middle of the nineteenth century the style's popularity saw its presence grow in other genres. For instance, in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Chesney Wold is represented as a somewhat burlesque version of gothic architecture: '[L]ong lines of dark windows diversified by turreted towers and porches of eccentric shapes, where old stone lions and grotesque monsters bristled outside dens of shadow and snarled at the evening gloom over the escutcheons they held in their grip'.¹⁴² Architectural features like turreted towers and gargoyles were rarely used in the domestic architecture of any period; more

¹⁴² Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1868), p. 412.

common from the medieval period through the seventeenth century, even for large houses, were timber-framed structures most often associated with Tudor buildings.¹⁴³ Where the gothic characterisation of Chesney Wold signifies the building's historic significance and its enigmatic inhabitants, Ward represents Mellor Park as a composite structure of historic and characteristically English styles. It is not exactly that Ward eschews the gothic, but rather that she complicates its aesthetic. Mellor's original frame is a 'Tudor house, grey, mullioned and ivy-covered' that runs at 'right angles into the later "garden front"' that was completed with numerous other structural changes in the eighteenth century. The first extended description of the house, which focuses on the interior rather than the exterior, elaborates this combination of architectural styles. The number of styles and periods that are included in the breakfast room, like the house's structure itself, refer to the necessarily progressive nature of building. This composite aesthetic, and the gradual and progressive construction it implies, corresponds to processes of liberal cognition, and what the novel advocates must be the gradual nature of social change. After Marcella descends the 'beautiful Jacobean staircase' (50) she attends breakfast in the

'Chinese room,' a room which formed part of the stately 'garden front,' added to the original structure of the house in the eighteenth century by a Boyce whose wife had money. The decorations, especially of the domed and vaulted roof, were supposed by their eighteenth-century designers to be 'Oriental'; they were, at any rate, intricate and overladen; and the figures of the mandarins on the worn and discoloured wall-paper had, at least, top-knots, pig-tails, and petticoats to distinguish them from the ordinary Englishmen of 1760 [...]. Unluckily, some later Boyce had thrust a crude Gothic sideboard, with an arched and pillared front, adapted to the purpose of a warming apparatus, into the midst of the mandarins, which disturbed the general effect. But with all its original absurdities, and its modern effacements, the room was a beautiful and stately one. (50)

The breakfast room at Mellor, the 'Chinese room', although inconsistent in style expresses the structure's history as lived space rather than as a quotation of the gothic aesthetic. The room

143 The grandest of country houses may have been constructed from stone or, by the nineteenth-century, brick, and therefore may have included such architectural embellishments. However, such features were uncommon. It is partly for this reason that Horace Walpole's 'gothick' home was viewed as vulgar and absurd when it was first built. Matthew Johnson, *English Houses 1300-1800* (London: Pearson, 2007), p. 67.

Marcella describes calls attention to the house's grand history, but also undermines history's authority by calling into question its authenticity. For Marcella, the unnecessary structural features are an embarrassment, the chinoiserie an unmistakable misinterpretation, and the addition of the crudely embellished gothic sideboard is wildly incongruous. The room becomes an aggregate of outmoded absurdities – but it is 'beautiful and stately' nonetheless. The novel does not draw on Ruskin in order to celebrate the higher nobility of the gothic tradition, but instead to consider the mutually formative relationship between the house and its inhabitants: the building's character influences, and is influenced by, Marcella's development throughout the novel.¹⁴⁴

Mellor's inconsistent style may owe something to Ward's own experience as resident of two country estates while conceiving of and writing the novel. During the summer of 1892, Ward left Haslemere on account of the 'rise of new houses wherever land could be had for building' and settled at the Hertfordshire estate known as Stocks.¹⁴⁵ John Sutherland notes that the success of *Robert Elsmere* allowed the Wards to take residence at Stocks, and also signalled their entry into England's landed gentry.¹⁴⁶ This new social and economic position required a period of adjustment, and this psychological transition produces a tension between an 'orthodox plot' and the 'other plot' that Bindslev suggests is evident in *Marcella*.¹⁴⁷ That is, Ward's residential move and change in social status during the course of writing the novel affected its narrative structure. In the introduction to the Westmoreland edition (1911), Ward explains that the novel's poaching incident is based partly on a similar 'tragedy' that occurred on grounds near Stocks just prior to their arrival, where two poachers had been executed after being found guilty of the murder of two gamekeepers.¹⁴⁸ Ward writes that 'the event, in all its bearings – economic, social, political – affected me as a stranger and observer, more sharply probably than it would have done had I been

144 John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, Vol 2 (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1875), p. 175.

145 Mrs Humphry [Mary] Ward, 'Introduction to the Westmoreland edition', in *Marcella*, Vol 1 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p. i.

146 John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-Eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 142-143.

147 Bindslev, p. 21.

148 Ward, 'Introduction to the Westmoreland edition', p. i.



Figure 4: Hampden House, Entrance, Buckinghamshire (1910).

Source: Mrs Humphry [Mary Augusta] Ward, *Marcella*, Vol 2 (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1910), p. 306.

always country-born and bred'.¹⁴⁹ Given the fractured psychological and social experience produced by moving to Stocks, it is fitting that architectural representations in *Marcella* should draw on different residential buildings that exhibit inconsistent styles. Although Ward was living at Stocks while writing *Marcella*, she explains that Mellor was architecturally influenced by Hampden House where she and her husband spent the summer of 1889. At the time of Ward's visit, the house's original Tudor structure was still visible in the main hall but the front elevation (and much of the house otherwise) had been unsympathetically refaced in the eighteenth century. A photograph included in the Westmoreland edition (Figure 4) attests to the building's peculiarity: the structure retains its classical symmetry, but its roofline is crowned with battlements, the fenestration includes a combination of rectangular windows with tracery on the ground floor, Tudor mullioned windows

¹⁴⁹ Ward, 'Introduction to the Westmoreland edition', p. ii.

at the second storey, and blind gothic windows at the upper storey; a stylised trefoil runs at the cornice and, perhaps the strangest of all, the portico is marked by a massive non-structural gothic arch.¹⁵⁰ Its structure visibly demonstrates the progressive nature of building and also makes plain the developments of social and material history. The original house has at its core an open central hall, a distinctive feature of Tudor residential buildings which often served as a court, dining room, reception room, theatre, and occasional sleeping room.¹⁵¹ By the eighteenth century, as Matthew Johnson points out, domestic architecture became dominated by the ordering and division of internal space due in part to the influence of neo-classicism and changing social practices that emphasised autonomy and privacy.¹⁵² The eighteenth-century renovations, made by the ancestor who is Marcella's namesake and 'whose money had been so gracefully and vainly lavished' (181) on the house (181), communicate social and historical distance despite the evident attempt to make them sympathetic. Although the novel does not describe in detail the alterations made to the building's exterior, the reader can assume based on the description of the 'Chinese room' that they are at best unsympathetic and at worst 'crude' and 'absurd' (50). One only has to consider the peculiar eighteenth-century neo-gothic renovations at Hampden House to complete the picture of architectural peculiarity that is hinted at in the novel. As Tim Oliver points out, the alterations that were made by a 'keen amateur architect' in order to enhance the 'authentic medieval [character of] Hampden House' are not at all authentic, but are instead a form of mock gothic.¹⁵³ The architect's ambition of stylistic accuracy is, like the 'Chinese room', undermined by the house's materiality; it does not represent authentic gothic, nor only mock gothic, but speaks of the ways that the gradual nature of social development is given evidence in material history.

At Mellor, a staircase that joins the original house to its later extension helps to explicate the

150 A note accompanying the illustration states: 'This is a late eighteenth-century addition to the house which was described as Mellor Park [...]. It masks some of the oldest portions of the house and gives access to the fine Tudor hall, which contains interesting portraits of the Tudor and Stuart times. From a photograph taken especially for this edition. See Ward, 'Notes on the Illustrations', in *Marcella* (1910), n.p.

151 Trudy West, *The Timber-Frame House in England* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1979), pp. 26-29.

152 Johnson, p. 67.

153 Tim Oliver, 'A History of Hampden House', *The John Hampden Society*, pp. 1-5 (p. 4). <www.johnhampden.org>. [accessed 12 April 2013]

novel's key themes of ideological deliberation and historical transition. The staircase appears in a pivotal scene that provokes Marcella's decision to break off her engagement with Raeburn and move from Mellor to Bloomsbury. Upon returning home one night from Raeburn's family home, Maxwell Court, Marcella finds that 'her wing of the house [...] weighed upon her; the noises made by the old boards under her steps, the rustling draughts from the dark passage to her right and left startled and troubled her' (233). The scene draws on (or again, mocks) gothic conventions – here it is the gothic ghost – in order to dramatise the effect created by what Anthony Vidler refers to as the unhomely house. Vidler suggests that there is rarely 'any striking detail in the house itself' and instead the shadowy fancies of the atmosphere can instead be attributed to the narrator's or character's psychology.¹⁵⁴ In *Marcella* this effect is produced not by one or the other – either the house or the character's psyche – but rather by the interplay of the material and the psychological. The narration is focalised through Marcella's observations of the house's structural detail:

[T]he moonlight was streaming in through its uncovered windows, not directly, but reflected from the Tudor front of the house which ran at angles to this passage, and was to-night a shining silver palace, every battlement, window, and moulding in sharpest light and shade under the radiance of the night. Beneath her feet, as she looked out into the Cedar Garden, was a deep triangle of shadow, thrown by that part of the building in which she stood. [...] She paused a moment, struck by the strangeness and beauty of the spectacle. (233)

The description shares some features with Vidler's uncanny – in particular the combination of strangeness and beauty, which causes the house to become unfamiliar – but the house is not a 'dead house' nor is it haunted in a literal sense.¹⁵⁵ The moonlight shines upon the original Tudor front of the house where its features are projected and thus juxtaposed onto the perpendicular Georgian passageway creating a spectral layering of historical periods. Marcella herself is projected onto the layered image of history that the house casts onto the Cedar Garden. The image of the house is one in which she is also represented: through shadow she becomes as much a part of the architecture as

154 Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (London: MIT, 1992), p. 17.

155 Vidler, p. 19.

the building itself. In *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), a short volume drawn together in preparation for the compendious *The Stones of Venice* (1853), Ruskin proposes that shadows equally participate in architectural aspect: 'Let him [the architect] cut out the shadows, as men dig wells in unwatered planes'.¹⁵⁶ The moment differs somewhat from a conventional instance of narrative crisis as it does not mark a turning point or decision, but instead incites 'the search for identity and social purpose' within the 'sweep of Infinite history'.¹⁵⁷

In an effort to make sense of her emotional response to the spectral image cast onto the lawn, Marcella withdraws to her bedroom where a candle 'illuminate[s] the lines of her own form, as she saw it reflected in the big glass of the wardrobe', and she feels an 'overwhelming passionate desire, almost a cry' (233). While the narrative implies her distress and confusion are responses to her increasingly intimate relationship with Harry Wharton, Raeburn's political rival and a man with whom she feels a greater ideological affinity, such emotions are a consequence rather than a cause of Marcella's struggle for individuality. Outside the door to Marcella's bedroom 'a little spiral staircase led down from her corridor to the one below, which ran at the back of the old library, and opened into the Cedar Garden at its further end' (234). Once again, the staircase in this scene is used to call the reader's attention to areas of transition: the architectural transition between space; the historical transition between different parts of the house (it is in the old library where her namesake's portrait hangs); and narrative transition, as this is the point at which Marcella's political and ethical actions differentiate her from her family. While seated in front of her mirror, Marcella hears footsteps descending the stairs that 'represented that part of the house to which the ghost stories of Mellor clung most persistently' (234). After following the footsteps into the library Marcella discovers not the ghost but, disappointingly, Wharton. Much has been made of this scene as it brings the political and romantic narratives into the same physical space, and also incites a sharp turn in the narrative: Marcella watches the poor rural labourer cross her property, and later

¹⁵⁶ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1865), p. 70.

¹⁵⁷ J. Norton-Smith, 'An Introduction to Mrs Humphry Ward, Novelist', *Essays in Criticism*, 1 (1968), 420-428 (p. 421).

hears the gunshot that introduces the storyline of the gamekeeper's murder. It is also during this scene that Wharton causes Marcella to reveal her doubts about her marriage to Raeburn. While scholars identify Wharton's sexual canvassing (he eventually kisses her) as an important moment that destabilises the narrative's conventional marriage plot, I would argue that the house itself – and its effect on Marcella's processes of self-examination and political deliberation – plays an equally important role in coaxing her onto a different trajectory. Although Marcella is torn ideologically between her moral dedication to socialism (from which her interest in Wharton stems) and her personal commitment to her Tory fiancé Raeburn, she does not simply trade affections back and forth. In fact, the narrative is never completely sincere in presenting Wharton as a romantic interest and often undercuts his impassioned liberal speeches with a dry awareness of his egotism. At a point earlier in the text when first standing in the library Wharton energetically remarks: 'I *love* this dilapidation! [...] Only it makes me long to take off my coat and practise some honest trade or other – plastering, or carpentering, or painting. What useless drones we upper classes are! Neither you nor I could mend that ceiling or patch this floor – to save our lives' (181). Wharton's simple enthusiasm for repair seems hollow and disingenuous. Indeed, Collister suggests the ghost anticipates the 'uneasy feeling of unreality and self-deception' that is in fact the result of Wharton's theatrical egocentricity.¹⁵⁸ Yet Wharton does get one thing right: he draws Marcella's attention to the house's history and her implication in its tradition. Throwing open the doors to light and shadow he remarks: 'You love the place; but did you ever see it so lovable? The dead are here; you did right to come and seek them! Look at your namesake, in that ray. To-night she lives!' (236). While gazing upon the portrait Marcella decides not to 'vainly lavish' (181) money upon the house or otherwise use it to support her own status, as did her ancestor. Instead, she begins to foster the development of a social conscience that better suits her own political and historical moment and decides to inhabit a different home altogether. For this reason I suggest that Marcella's eventual decision to cancel her engagement and move from Mellor is not simply a response to the narrative's romantic conflict, but

158 Collister, p. 306.

a reaction to an ethical and historical dilemma. The model dwellings in Bloomsbury to which Marcella moves, the Brown's Buildings, allow her to better understand her own political beliefs, and eventually, romantic desires.

III

While it has been acknowledged that Ward drew the political plot of *Marcella* partly from Gissing's *Demos* (1886), it is possible that Gissing's rendering of working-class housing also influenced – or perhaps provoked – her consideration of model dwellings in the novel.¹⁵⁹ While Gissing's representation of working-class housing most often communicates the materially circumscribed lives of the inhabitants of such buildings, in *Marcella* the Brown's Buildings figure differently: Marcella's experience living in model dwellings *enables* her intellectual and emotional development. In this sense, I would like to set aside the conventional interpretation of the narrative as one that charts Marcella's 'return from a “new [woman]” position to a more traditional role', and instead consider the ways that the narrative events that take place in the Brown's Buildings preclude any sense of return, whether to Mellor or to Raeburn.¹⁶⁰ Such a reading unearths its own problems. There is, of course, a distinct social insensitivity in granting an upper-class woman access to temporary residence in working-class dwellings so that she might personally benefit from the placement. The people whose friendships she enjoys while living in the buildings do not have the resources to make the (personal or political) choices that are available to Marcella in this novel. This form of philanthropic sojourn is precisely the activity that Harkness problematises in *George Eastmont, Wanderer*. Yet the novel is more than a testament to the revitalising powers of what Seth Koven refers to as 'slumming', or the movement of a privileged individual across spatial and social boundaries.¹⁶¹ The loose template of the *bildungsroman* that guides this novel positions the

159 Sutherland, Appendix B.

160 Bindslev, p. 85.

161 Koven, p. 9. The definition of slumming used in this thesis is somewhat less capacious than Koven's definition, which includes any aspect of looking at poverty – from slum tourism to philanthropic missions. Useful as this understanding of the term is for his own study, I hesitate to assign it to Marcella's efforts in this novel. Earning her living as a district nurse, as she does, Marcella shares spaces of both work and leisure with the urban poor and

protagonist, and her development, at the centre of the narrative.

Ward was personally active in social improvement schemes throughout London during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and therefore her desire to convey through fiction the positive effects of model dwellings projects and the settlement movement makes sense. The published version of the novel refers to the model dwellings in which Marcella lives as the Brown's Building, but as noted previously, the original manuscript helpfully refers to them as the 'Peabody's Buildings'.¹⁶² The description of the Brown's Buildings' geographic location in 'West Central London [...] within the same district' (341) as Hallin's lodgings on an 'old-fashioned street' (351) in Bloomsbury, allows them to be identified as the Peabody Buildings on Little Coram Street (later Herbrand Street) completed in 1884. That Marcella becomes resident of these particular buildings owes much to Ward's knowledge of the Peabody Buildings at Little Coram Street and her familiarity with the inhabitants, for Ward herself established a philanthropic settlement in the neighbourhood only four years before publishing *Marcella*. Bloomsbury's development during the nineteenth century was hastened by the sale of large portions of land that once belonged to the Duke of Bedford, but which had been sold to the Foundling Trust for the construction of the Foundling Hospital. Having purchased considerably more land than was necessary, the Trust was eager to off-load the slum area on Little Coram Street to the Peabody Trust in 1882, on which the Herbrand Street Buildings (or Brown's Buildings in the novel) were constructed.¹⁶³ Just around the corner from these buildings was a large site that the Duke of Bedford – eager to increase the value of his own property – agreed to long lease for £10 per annum for the establishment of a new philanthropic project: the University Hall Settlement.¹⁶⁴ Modelled on Toynbee Hall, which had been established in London's East End in 1884, the University Hall Settlement was first established by Ward in Bloomsbury in 1890 in order to offer lectures, classes, and social events to local working-

working classes. This is, however, not to discount her social difference.

162 Mellor and Sutton-Ramspeck, p. 349, n. 1.

163 Rosemary Ashton, *Victorian Bloomsbury* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 293-300.

164 Peter Baynes, *John Passmore Edwards and Mary Ward* (London: The Mary Ward Centre, 1991), p. 17. See also Ashton, p. 295-297.

class residents. By the mid-nineties, the Settlement had grown to a such a size that it required premises larger than its original site at Gordon Square. After raising finances for the construction of a new building, the largest portion of which came from the newspaper magnate John Passmore Edwards, the new building was eventually constructed on a corner at Tavistock Place, opposite the Peabody Buildings, and was officially opened by Ward in October 1897.¹⁶⁵

At this point it is worthwhile to give some consideration to the building at Tavistock Place that would become the Passmore Edwards Settlement (Figure 5) – and eventually the Mary Ward Settlement upon Ward's death in 1921.¹⁶⁶ Designed by Arnold Dunbar Smith and Cecil Claude Brewer and constructed from 1895-8, the settlement has been described as one of London's finest Arts and Crafts buildings.¹⁶⁷ What is especially notable is that Smith and Brewer were best known for their work in domestic architecture, and the building at Tavistock Place represents an original and unprecedented use of residential style in public building. However the building also represents what the *British Architect* describes as a 'problem of architectural design', because the structure is 'a combination of domestic and public uses: a home for residents and a recreative and educational institution for the public'.¹⁶⁸ It was important that the building allow for a range of activities – dining, debating, public lectures – and its design reflects this in both action and aspect, to return once again to Ruskin's terms. The building's front elevation uses predominantly red brick, a material associated with domestic architecture during the nineteenth century, but the unusual projecting wings that flank this central section, the use of white plaster above the cornice and the low-hipped roof off-set the residential design. The entrances to the building are designed differently depending on purpose: from each wing projects a symmetrical portico with a curved balustrade that

165 Although the building was officially opened in February 1898, it was in use as of October 1897. See Ashton, p. 299.

166 The Mary Ward Centre, as it is known today, moved from the building at Tavistock Place to its current home at 42 Queen Square in 1982.

167 The architects were in fact residents of the University Settlement during its time at Gordon Square, and moved into the building they designed upon its completion in 1898. According to Peter Davey 'many of the [Settlement's] inhabitants were young architects.' See Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture* (London: Phaidon, 1985), p. 144.

168 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement', *British Architect*, 25 February 1898, pp. 125-126 (p. 125).

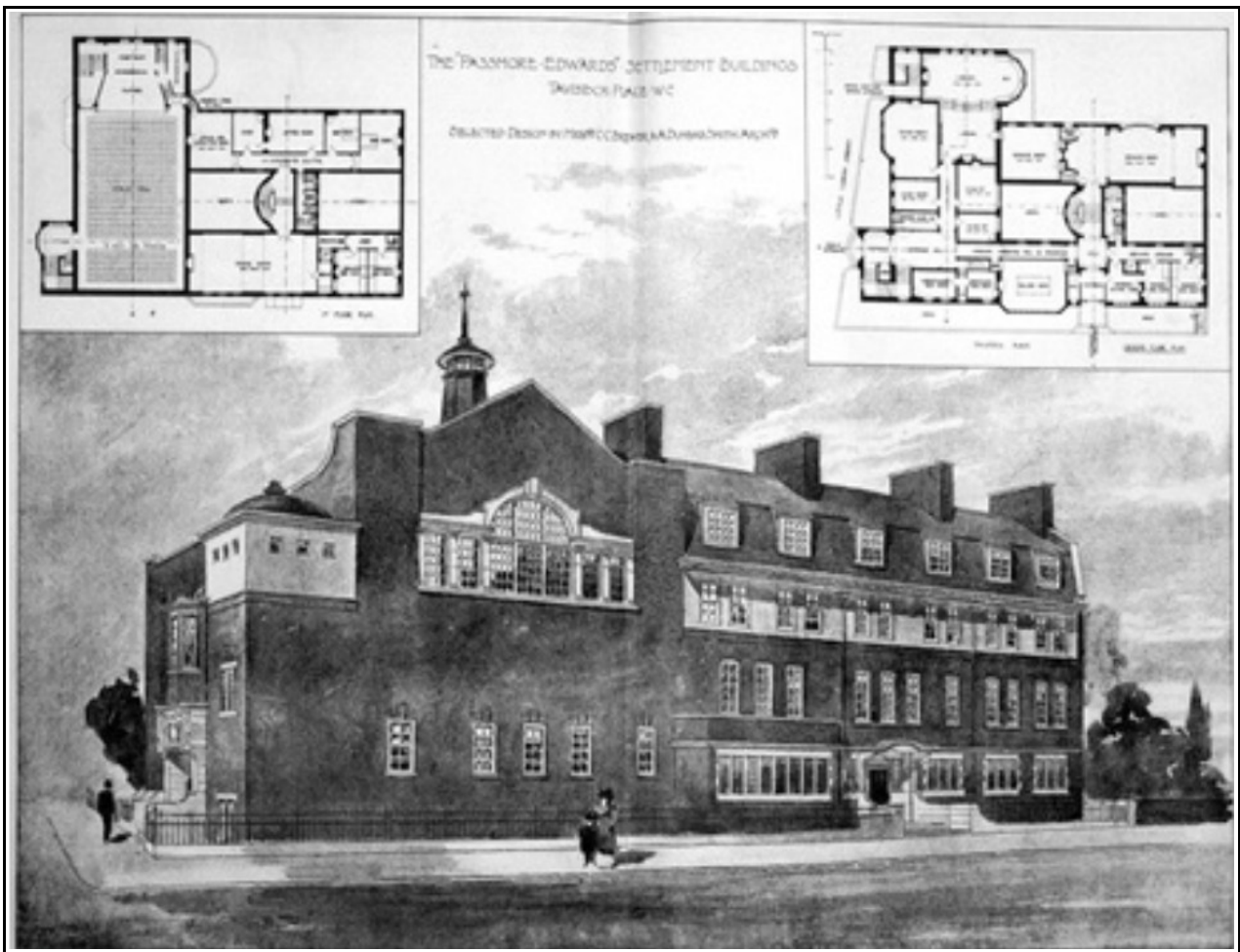


Figure 5: C.C. Brewer and A. Dunbar-Smith, Passmore Edwards Settlement, Plan and Front Elevation (1895).

Source: RIBApix, RIBA Collections 16736, 'Passmore Edwards Settlement', *Building News*, 69 (1895), 208.

allows access to the public spaces of the building, and an off-centre projecting stone vestibule punctuated by a four-point arched entranceway provides access to the residential area. The *British Architect* also notes that the building's interior exhibits a similar combination of styles, a 'real homeliness' but also a 'simplicity of general effect'.¹⁶⁹ Despite the architectural simplicity, the building had clearly been designed with 'every care as to [its] purpose' and for this reason it marked a departure from most nineteenth-century buildings; it looks ahead to the twentieth century's emphasis on design over decoration. This combination of residential and civic purpose, and the resulting marriage of styles, marks a radical departure from conventional ways of thinking about

¹⁶⁹ 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement', *British Architect*.

buildings. This is an important point to which I will return at the conclusion to this chapter, but it is important to state here that the building that would house the Passmore Edwards Settlement brings together the political and ethical ideals first explored in *Marcella*.

The University House Settlement attracted many residents of the nearby Peabody Buildings during its time at Gordon Square and after its move to Tavistock Place, and Ward was therefore familiar with the personal circumstances of the model dwelling's inhabitants. In fact, in 1881 Ward moved to 61 Russell Square, situated only slightly southwest of Little Coram Street, and would therefore have also witnessed Bloomsbury's development during the this period.¹⁷⁰ The Peabody Trust has become in the twentieth century the name most associated with model housing for the working classes, largely due to its role as the company that 'excited the most interest and stimulated the most controversy'.¹⁷¹ The Peabody Trust erected dwellings that were not for the poorest residents of the city, but for artisans and skilled labourers. Despite their barrack-like appearance, the building stock was of good quality and therefore many of the Peabody Trust's buildings remain the architectural fabric of London today. Founded in 1862 by the American banker George Peabody, the Peabody Fund was soon one of the city's largest and fastest-growing contributors to the construction of model dwellings for the urban poor.¹⁷² By 1907, the Trust had provided 5469 tenements or flats for residents across London from Whitechapel to Southwark and many neighbourhoods in between.¹⁷³ While the design of each Peabody Block depended partly upon the area in which it was constructed, the majority of the buildings were designed by Henry Darbishire who, in using certain consistent features, developed an architectural typology that is evident at Herbrand Street. Constructed on a slum clearance site, the estate at Herbrand Street (Figure 6) consists of a series of four shallow four-storey blocks arranged to form an internal courtyard. These buildings are of yellow brick (local and therefore less expensive), and each central range is bound

¹⁷⁰ Baynes, p. 5.

¹⁷¹ Wohl, p. 153.

¹⁷² This was largely a consequence of the funds received on interests and profits of rents being paid back into the trust, rather than fully divided among shareholders as was common in philanthropic housing schemes (Thompson, p. 147). For more on these schemes, see Chapter 2.1 of the present work.

¹⁷³ Wohl, p. 149.



Figure 6: Peabody Trust Estate, Herbrand Street (built 1885; photograph date unknown).

Source: Courtauld Collections, Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art.

by a crossing tower at each end. Although during the nineteenth century the buildings were often considered bulky and like army barracks (mostly, of course, by the middle classes), the architect has skilfully balanced the vertical massing of the building by using a series of horizontal string courses of stone marked off by an entablature and a heavy cornice. The buildings at Herbrand Street attracted a diversity of residents, many of whom were financially secure enough to live alone in a two- or three-bedroom dwelling.¹⁷⁴

In the novel, Marcella rents tenement 'number 10' (347) of the 'E. block' in the 'Brown's

¹⁷⁴ Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 250.

Buildings' (349) while working in London as a district nurse. Unlike the representation of model dwellings in most contemporary writing, the model dwellings in *Marcella* are austere but still an important social project. The Brown's Buildings substantiate the ways in which model dwellings were purported to emancipate their residents from (what were understood as) characteristic working-class habits and behaviours, and to offer them a leg-up onto the ladder of social mobility by inculcating certain middle-class aspirations. The novel makes clear that the action – or functionality – of these buildings is in good order, both in the sense of their structural solidity and social effectiveness. It does not, however, shy away from the building's evident want of aspect: the degree to which the buildings could be considered socially pleasing. The Brown's Buildings are therefore appropriately named; they are functional but uninspired, 'tall yet mean' (347). In this sense, the novel follows the conventional characterization of model dwellings in nineteenth-century literature. Perhaps most famous is George Gissing's description of the Farringdon Road Buildings in *The Nether World* (1889) as 'those terrible barracks!' (274). With the dramatic cynicism characteristic of Gissing's prose, the narrator describes the buildings as

[v]ast, sheer walls, unbroken by even an attempt at ornament; row above row of windows in the mud-coloured surface, upwards, upwards, lifeless eyes, murky openings that tell of bareness, disorder, comfortlessness within. [...] An inner courtyard, asphalted, swept clean – looking up to the sky as from a prison. Acres of these edifices, the tinge of grime declaring the relative dates of their erection; millions of tons of brute brick and mortar, crushing the spirit as you gaze. Barracks, in truth; housing for the army of industrialism, an army fighting with itself, rank against rank, man against man, that the survivors may have whereon to feed. Pass by in the night, and strain imagination to picture the weltering mass of human weariness, of bestiality, of unmerited dolour, of hopeless hope, of crushed surrender, tumbled together within those forbidding walls.¹⁷⁵

Although the reader may have a general sense of the architecture of the buildings based on this description, the narrative is clearly preoccupied with relating their visual oppressiveness through metaphor: the windows are 'lifeless eyes' and the central courtyard although clean is 'prison-like'.

175 George Gissing, *The Nether World* (Brighton: Harvester, 1974), p. 274.

The description is, of course, exaggerated. For instance, the buildings did, in fact, present varying courses of brick, concrete sills, and also an ornamented cornice. More remarkably, at a time when most model dwellings companies were building associated tenements that shared washroom facilities the Farringdon Road Buildings provided self-contained flats and even offered residents balconies on which they might grow flowers. This impression, drawn from the perspective not of a resident but of someone who would 'pass by', reveals what Richard Dennis identifies as an aspect of Gissing's 'prejudice against flats': as a member of the middle class, Gissing was less able to appreciate the improvement to working-class housing made by many model dwellings companies.¹⁷⁶ The Farringdon Road Buildings were built between 1872-4 and financed by the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrial Classes, one of the most established of the city's model dwelling companies. Although these buildings housed a class of residents somewhat less financially secure than the Peabody Buildings at Herbrand Street, the inhabitants were engaged in regular employment and were by no means as destitute as those housed in the Katharine Buildings in East Smithfield.¹⁷⁷ In fact, the dwellings were 'highly appreciated' by the tenants.¹⁷⁸ The description of the buildings in *The Nether World* is of course hyperbolised for the purpose of illustrating the relationship between industrialisation and oppression; the inhabitants of the Farringdon Road Buildings, in other words, were not only exploited as employees but were also circumscribed by the very structures that industry made possible.

In *Marcella*, although the narrator reveals the bleak aspect of the new structures provided by model dwellings companies, the narrative itself endorses the improvements these buildings were designed to enable. One of the ways the novel accomplishes this is by describing the psychological

176 Richard Dennis, 'Buildings, Residences and Mansions: George Gissing's Prejudice Against Flats', in *Gissing and the City: Cultural Crisis and the Making of Books in Late Victorian England*, ed. by John Spires (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 41-62.

177 For a detailed examination of the architecture of the Katharine Buildings, East Smithfield (East End Dwellings Company), see Chapter 2.1 of the present work.

178 As Dennis points out, the residents of the Farringdon Road Buildings have considerably less hostility to these model dwellings than does the narrator. Despite their contentment they are nonetheless characters who are, according to the narrator's descriptions, severely limited by their complacency with their own living conditions. See Dennis, 'Buildings, Residences and Mansions', p. 53. See also 'Farringdon Road', *Survey of London: Volume 46 South and East Clerkenwell* (2008), pp. 358-384 <www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=11942> [accessed 1 April 2013].

stability, and in particular the sense of practical independence, that the buildings make possible for Marcella. On her way home after a night shift, Marcella

entered the iron gate of the dwellings, and saw before her the large asphalted court round which they ran – blazing heat on one side of it, and on the other some children playing cricket against the wall with chalk-marks for wickets – she was seized with depression. The tall yet mean buildings, the smell of dust and heat, the general impression and packed and crowded humanity – these things, instead of offering her rest, only continued and accented the sense of strain, called for more endurance, more making the best of it. (347)

This description lacks the histrionic style of Gissing's prose, but the difference is that the struggle faced by the building's inhabitants in *The Nether World* is perceived to be 'man against man' whereas in *Marcella* it is a struggle of will and 'endurance' against oneself. For Marcella, it is this struggle that contributes to the development of her character and judgement throughout the novel. Although living among a 'very respectable though poor class' (348), Marcella endeavours to improve her situation. For instance, she invites the poacher's young widow and her children to live with her in the buildings under the pretence of having her assist with household duties. With the permission of the trustees she makes 'a temporary communication' between the two flats 'so that she could either live her own solitary and independent life, or call for their companionship, as she pleased' (348). It would be a leap of logic to suggest that Ward aims to demonstrate the ways that, like Marcella, the other residents of the building would be able to 'endure' their way out of their economic or social situations. After all, it seems clear that Ward imagines Marcella as exceptional in this circumstance on account of the socially paternalistic role she adopts while living in the buildings. Although this novel is more complex in its treatment of women's intellectual development than has previously been assumed, it would be misleading to suggest that it is in any way progressive in its treatment of the working classes. Once again, Ward is concerned more with her protagonist's development – a convention of the *bildungsroman* – and the way this is incited by her willingness to entertain multiple perspectives and ideas. This individualism is evident in the

ways the novel represents Marcella's habitation in the Buildings. For instance, in the extract quoted above the buildings' exterior instils in Marcella a sense of strain and depression, but those aspects of the building that she can influence or alter provide her with a sense of accomplishment and contentment. There is evident satisfaction for Marcella in her isolation and self-determinacy that is absent from the heavily circumscribed characters of Gissing's work:

As she shut her door behind her she found herself in a little passage or entry. To the left was her bedroom. Straight in front of her was the living room with a small close range in it, and behind it a little back kitchen.

The living room was cheerful and even pretty. Her art-student's training showed itself. The cheap blue and white paper, the couple of oak flap tables from a broker's shop in Marchmont Street, the two or three cane chairs with their bright chintz cushions, the Indian rug or two on the varnished boards, the photographs and etchings on the walls, the books on the tables – there was not one of these things that was not in its degree a pleasure to her young sense, that did not help her to live her life. This afternoon, as she opened the door and looked in, the pretty colours and forms in the tiny room were as water to the thirsty. (348)

The room offers to Marcella the aspect that is absent from the building's exterior, and is enhanced due to her own involvement in establishing its character. Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole Meller note that 'residents' alterations were strictly controlled' and for this reason 'Marcella's re-modelling seems implausible' (349, n1), but it is less important for my argument that Marcella's renovations are accurate than that they appear at all. The time Marcella spends as resident of the Brown's Buildings, which is structurally the novel's centre, marks the most pivotal point in her personal development. As the Brown's Buildings have been constructed for the practical purpose of providing housing for the urban working classes, we can interpret them as demonstrative of Ruskin's notion of action not only in their structural practicality but also in social purposiveness. And if Mellor's aspect came partly at the cost of its dilapidation, the Brown's Building's effectiveness pays the price of comparative characterlessness. The modifications that Marcella makes to her flat are not merely superficial, because they 'help her to live her life' (348). The Brown's Buildings strike close to an architectural ideal that balances action with aspect; and it is

this balance of commitments or interplay of ideas, the novel suggests, that enables individual development and, correspondingly, the transition of private free thought into public opinion.

Marcella pays particular attention to the ways that the Brown's Buildings enable Marcella's emotional maturity and intellectual development through their presentation of action and aspect. This is an important facet of the narrative, as the interplay of ideas, given substance by Marcella's residence in the Brown's Buildings where she encounters a variety of opinions and ideas, becomes a method by which the novel proposes that social and political change can be achieved. The novel suggests that Marcella's intellectual development would not be possible without her residential improvements, and not only in the sense that it makes her environment more aesthetically pleasant – it also changes the dwelling's function to a space that allows for the domestic, the social, and the political to exist in one space. For instance, the text provides us with reconceptualisation of the conventional nineteenth-century 'at home', a gathering that Marcella hosts in her home and to which she invites groups of people from various social and economic backgrounds, and of differing political sympathies. These meetings stimulate Marcella's critical judgement. She explains to Wharton:

I am full of perplexities; and the Cravens, I see, will soon be for turning me out. You understand – I *know* some working folk now! [...] [N]ow I am in their world – I live with them – and they talk to me. One evening in the week I am 'at home' for all the people I know in our Buildings – men and women [...]. The men smoke – when we can have the windows open! – and I believe I shall soon smoke too – it makes them talk better. We get all sorts – Socialists, Conservatives, Radicals – [...]. (399)

As the social and political nucleus of the Brown's Buildings, Marcella's flat epitomises the ideological diversity that matches its variegated aesthetic character created by the Indian rug, chintz cushions and old oak table. The two-room dwelling is a space that enables Marcella's self-determination – the will and 'endurance' to '[make] the best of it' (347) – and that contributes to the development of what Collister defines as her 'conscience, judgement and discrimination'.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁹ Collister, p. 307.

experience of living independently at the Brown's Buildings therefore does not 'correct [Marcella's] radicalism', but instead allows her to test the limitations of her ideological convictions.¹⁸⁰ The Brown's Buildings, the novel suggests, provide the structural framework that allows for the expression of individual character. It is in the context of these public 'at home[s]' that Marcella, having been given space for self-reflection and deliberation, can now convey opinion. These processes of continuing exchange, first the liberal individual's processes of private cognition, and later, the communication of these ideas into public opinions, strike closer at the novel's ideological heart than does a simple exchange of socialism for conservatism. When Marcella begins to question socialism's effectiveness at the novel's conclusion, it is partly because she believes it does not take enough account of individual circumstance or allow for change. After her socialist friend Craven reproaches her for her inconsistent political affinities she retorts:

[S]o far as Socialism means a political system – the trampling out of private enterprise and competition, and all the rest of it – I find myself slipping away from it more and more. No! – as I go about among these wage-earners, the emphasis – do what I will – comes to lie less and less on possession – more and more on character. I go to two tenements in the same building. One is Hell – the other Heaven. Why? Both belong to well-paid artisans with equal opportunities. (377)

Marcella's argument at this stage sounds not unlike the familiar doctrine of self-help, that is the notion that social position depends less on what one *has* and rather on what one *does*; after all, she questions not the material circumstances that might result in the development of different characters. Marcella's use of the word 'character' is here significant. As I have suggested, in *Marcella* Ward makes use of the materiality of domestic architecture in order to give expression to the processes of liberal cognition. Yet at this point in the narrative this materiality is abstracted into the notion of 'character'. The term is significant for a discussion of nineteenth-century liberalism, because it was this abstract quality that was seen to define the liberal individual. As Lauren Goodlad explains, in the nineteenth-century 'character' ceased to be a trait only available to

180 Argyle, p. 947.

gentlemen. Instead, character and its 'moral content' was often pitted against the 'levelling and materialism [...] of economic independence'.¹⁸¹ Character soon came to define political individuality and thereby became a central component of liberal subjecthood.¹⁸² By the late nineteenth-century, as Ruth Livesey notes, character became 'the causal factor in social explanation': it was 'a selfhood constructed from ideal moral dispositions rather than material physicality'.¹⁸³

In *Marcella*, Ward suggests that an individual's ability or the expression of their opinion is made possible by a broader framework of social engagement and support – and it is this which produces differences in character. This is true for Marcella's own development in the text, but also for other residents of the Brown's Buildings. The elderly Mrs. Jervis, who suffers from a variety of problems including an ulcerated foot, explains to Marcella that she dislikes the buildings on account of the limited number of religious tracts that circulate among the residents. Despite the apparent lack of religious literature, however, the buildings have provided Mrs. Jervis and her family with a home that enables them to improve their own lives in other ways; here, religion as a conventional if immaterial system of support is replaced by the organisation networks of the Brown's Buildings. Although Mrs. Jervis's daughter Emily is married, she has moved back into the buildings on account of the 'brutal ill-treatment of her husband' (380), which resulted in her child's death and very nearly nearly her own. The reasonable rent of three rooms in the buildings, together with her family's help to enable Emily to learn "the shirt-ironing" (381), allows the poor family to live 'with exquisite cleanliness and care' (318). The family is characterised as hard-working and respectable, and is therefore representative of the deserving poor. This is consistent with the Peabody Fund's strict and selective criteria, which insisted that the charity 'had no thought of helping such that did not help themselves'.¹⁸⁴ With the example of Mrs. Jervis the novel illustrates

181 Lauren Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 26.

182 Hadley, p. 7, n11. See also Goodlad, p. 26-27.

183 Ruth Livesey, 'Reading for Character: Women Social Reformers and Narratives of the Urban Poor in Late Victorian and Edwardian Literature', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 9.1 (2010), 43-67 (pp. 45-6).

184 Wohl, p. 155.

the ways that broader structural systems – whether model dwellings or the public realm of abstract political opinion – require the contributions of individuals whose commitment of character helps to ensure stability and continuation.

Before Marcella leaves her flat in the Brown's Buildings to return home to Mellor in order to nurse her dying father, she experiences a 'dangerous significant moment [...] at once of despair and of illusion' (387). This moment is pivotal in Marcella's intellectual maturation: after having access to a space that allows her to develop her own individuality, she comes to appreciate what she defines as the 'character' of others. After 'shut[ting] herself up' in the solitude of her flat she

hung at the window a long time, watching the stars come out, as the summer light died from the sky and even the walls and roofs, and chimneys of this interminable London spread out before her, to a certain dim beauty. And then, slipping down on the floor, with her head against a chair – an attitude of her stormy childhood – she wept with an abandonment and passion she had not known for years [...]. '[W]hat are opinions – what is influence, beauty, cleverness? – what is anything worth but *character* – but *soul*?'

And character – soul – can only be got by self-surrender; and self-surrender comes not of knowledge but of love. (386)

This moment in the narrative responds to the earlier scene that occurs at Mellor after Marcella sees her shadow cast before her, and upon returning to her bedroom, feels an 'overwhelming passionate desire, almost a cry' (233). If in the earlier scene Marcella's pursuit of the ghost conveys a desire to uncover the form and meaning of her own character, by this point Marcella interprets character not as an inherent quality but as a responsive process: character is the consequence of self-surrender to liberalism's diversity of opinion rather than the self-assertion of a particular ideology. These two scenes bookend Marcella's residence at the Brown's Buildings, during which time she lives supported by broader systems of charity that partly require her to surrender her sovereignty but also allow her to live more independently than had she remained at her family home. In this scene, the city is laid out before her: an assemblage of walls, roofs, and chimneys, that expresses an 'interminable' process of continuous responsive building and rebuilding that gives to London a

'certain dim beauty' of character. Lynda Nead, drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau, suggests that during the nineteenth century the aerial perspective articulated the 'totalising and voyeuristic viewpoint' of the city planner or mapmaker, and was contradicted on the ground by the 'detours and deviations of individual journeys'.¹⁸⁵ While such an interpretation has been productive for readings of social space, they often tell us little about the built environment. As 'this interminable London [is] spread before her', Marcella's perspective from a window in the Brown's Buildings is not totalising but rather a disparate accumulation of structures. The scene makes a direct connection between the representation of the built environment and the process of Marcella's intellectual development. This perspective of the city, looking out over London, gives evidence to the social and structural interdependency of the individual and the cumulative. It is a similar process of exchange and interdependence that Marcella realises is necessary for the development of her own character.

For Ruskin, to contemplate a building was 'not simply to look at something beautiful, it was also to contemplate a way of living, an ordering of human communities'.¹⁸⁶ In *Marcella*, the narrative uses a model dwelling to represent a successful example of a charitable project that unites individual ambition with broader structural systems. The narrative engages with new forms of urban housing to ask the reader to consider the 'ordering of human communities' and how such radical social projects might serve to suggest a model for political debate more generally. Yet the novel, which uses the materialism of domestic architecture to give substance to its demonstration of the processes of liberal cognition, returns at its conclusion to an abstraction: character. Therefore while the novel espouses the importance of materiality in shaping the patterns of the liberal ideology, it fails to take account of how this materialism might enable or disable an individual's capacity for these forms of self-reflection, deliberation and reason. The point here is not to reclaim the novel as a revolutionary text, but rather to be attentive to its ideological complexity. If we return

185 Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) p. 62; p. 75.

186 Johnson, p. 4.



Figure 7: The Mary Ward Centre, Tavistock Place (built 1898; photograph 1990).

Source: RIBApix, RIBA Collections 28422, photograph Janet Hall.

to consider the Passmore Edwards Settlement (Figure 7), we can better understand architecture's social and structural reconciliatory role in the novel. In both design and purpose, the building designed for Ward's University Hall Settlement expands upon the ideological complexity that is flattened into abstraction at the novel's conclusion. Like the Brown's Buildings, the Settlement provided a broader structure of organisational support for the seventeen residents who lived there as social workers, and also for the members of the community who subscribed to the settlement's classes, debates, lectures and facilities, which included men's and women's gyms, a library, common rooms, and a drawing room.¹⁸⁷ Its dual purpose as both a residential and civic structure is articulated in the building's design, which at once distinguishes between uses but also unifies these differences. For instance, although the residential entrance is marked out by the stone vestibule, it is

¹⁸⁷ Baynes, p. 16.

related to the public entrance by way of the curving balustrade. Furthermore, the residential entrance's slightly off-centre positioning denies it visual dominance of the front elevation. Although an original design for the building had been submitted by well-known architect A.H. Mackmurdo, the committee decided the plans were too costly and too fussy and instead under the adjudication of Norman Shaw settled on a modern design that Adrian Forty believes embodies 'an inspired moment in British architecture'.¹⁸⁸ It was a time when, architect Owen Fleming recollects, 'we believed that earnest and true thought expressed in buildings would awaken some response in the popular mind'.¹⁸⁹ Although 'tall and mean' in aspect, the Brown's Buildings work through many of the same progressive ideals that the Settlement building would animate socially and architecturally: in particular, the relationship between individual and community, and the services that structure this relationship. In this sense, in *Marcella* Ward works through many of the ideas that would receive their architectural articulation in the design and function of the Passmore Edwards Settlement. Although Ruskin's moral imperative is dampened in the novel, Ward asks the reader to consider the interplay between action and aspect in relationships represented in the novel – those between individuals, and also between individuals and the built environment. The novel's ambition is, therefore, not to stamp out political persuasions but instead to engage the minds and morals of its readership. In so doing, Ward gives the reader a similar task to the protagonist in the novel: to develop individuality, or 'character', within the broader theories and ideas present in social discourse.

188 Adrian Forty, 'The Mary Ward Settlement', *Architect's Journal*, 2 August, 1989, pp. 28-49 (p. 28).

189 Qtd. in Forty, p. 48.

3

CHAMBERS, DWELLINGS AND FLATS: URBAN HOUSING FOR WORKING WOMEN

By the end of the nineteenth century, an unprecedented number of single women were living and working in London. This change was the result of nearly a century's worth of agitation for equal opportunity in education and employment.¹ These independent women, as Martha Vicinus's work on women's communities has demonstrated,

wanted their own space, apart from the domestic world of their married sisters and from the male world in which they often moved. A community was a refuge, a foothold from which to launch into the wider world, but most of all, it was home.²

These homes and their communities are the subject of the present chapter. Yet there are important differences between the social groups that Vicinus describes and those that are examined here.

The communities that are the subject of *Independent Women* (1985) are based on residential institutions such as women's colleges, settlement houses and nurses' residences. In what follows, I examine women's housing that was not organised by pre-existing professional groups but instead developed in response to a need to accommodate the influx of women seeking employment in London. Alison Ravetz points out that such special needs to house women arose in part 'from the fact that, historically, women had no legal or financial identity outside of the family or marriage'.³ Although many women in late nineteenth-century London shared accommodation or established the households that Vicinus identifies, other women resisted their interpolation into the communities that are the subject of her work. This provokes an important question: if these communities did not provide homes for all of the city's working women, what did?

The chapter considers purpose-built housing designed for working women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century London and its representation in contemporaneous fiction.

1 See for instance Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women* (London: Virago, 1991); Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Lynne Walker, 'Home and Away: The Feminist Remapping of Public and Private in Victorian London', in *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space*, ed. by Iain Bordin et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 296-311.

2 Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 31.

3 Alison Ravetz, *The Place of Home: English Domestic Environments, 1914-2000* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), p. 44.

These homes were designed to be temporarily occupied, for women were expected to eventually integrate themselves into more conventional households, yet many women lived in such buildings throughout their adult lives. As such, these women remained outside the social and architectural conventions of the family and challenged its centrality as the dominant organising principle of society. Like other new forms of domestic architecture discussed in this thesis, working women's dwellings were one of a number of forms of new housing constructed during this period that would effect shifts in ideological understandings of gender and the conventional family unit.

'The Ideal Method of Living': Purpose-Built Housing for Single Working Women

In an article written for *London Society* in 1888, an anonymous author whom readers know only as 'a Frenchwoman in London' chronicles her attempt to find suitable lodgings in London. The task is nearly impossible. Although the streets are lined with houses, and there are spare rooms to be let, each is rendered ineligible – or she herself is ineligible – on account of a failure to comply with certain social expectations. For instance, boarding houses that are tolerably clean enough for consideration 'don't take in ladies' for the reason that they might 'go out late in the evening'.⁴ The alternative, the less respectable lodging houses, are patrolled by dishevelled women reeking of spirits and offer second-hand furnishings that are 'really too disgusting to think about'.⁵ Although the Frenchwoman eventually finds a draughty garret with an unremarkable landlady, the flame once fanned by the chimera of independence has been snuffed out. Her disillusion comes not from an inability to evince a spirit of independence, for that is what motivates her to seek employment and accommodation in London, but rather from the disappointing realisation that there exists in the city no social or material infrastructure to *support* women's self-determination. The author remarks that if a woman is lucky enough to find respectable and affordable lodgings, unlike a man she suffers from (among other unpleasant experiences) isolation:

⁴ 'A Frenchwoman in London', *London Society*, May 1888, pp. 489-505 (p. 492).

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 493.

[A] man more often works in the company of his fellows, and can always spend his evenings at his club or with his companions; he can frequent his pet restaurant, his favourite theatres and music halls, or any place his fancy selects where he can meet friends and acquaintances. How different must be the woman's life.⁶

The author here makes an important point, and one which is crucial for my argument: women were living and working independently in the city, but social convention and architectural practice had not yet expanded in a way to sufficiently accommodate them. The author notes that 'there are many thousands of women working for their daily bread' living in poor conditions, and suggests

how great a boon it would be if some nice places could be built containing suitable apartments, in which large numbers could live under one roof and have suitable attendance provided. There is a set of buildings in Oakley Street, Chelsea which answers to this description – but it is like a drop in the ocean. Many more such places are wanted, for there are thousands of women living in London who would gladly avail themselves of such advantages [...].⁷

The rhetoric used here is akin to an advertorial in its desire to highlight need as a justification for existence. However used in this way, the technique is as much a social appeal as it is a marketing strategy. During the late eighties, a series of articles on women's housing appeared in journals and newspapers. These ranged from personal accounts of the city's unsuitable accommodation to polemical essays accusing the government of insufficiently confronting the dearth of housing available to women. It was in the pages of publications like the *Englishwoman's Review*, the *Englishwoman's Year Book* and *Work and Leisure* that women campaigned for suitable homes for "Educated Working Women".⁸

The building that the author refers to in 'A Frenchwoman in London' – the Oakley Street Flats, Chelsea – was the earliest purpose-built residence for working women in London. The project had been financed by the Working Ladies' Guild, which was established by Lady Mary

6 Ibid., p. 502.

7 Ibid.

8 Alice Zimmern, 'Ladies Dwellings', *Contemporary Review*, 77 (1900), pp. 96-104 (p. 97).

Fielding who in 1877 had acquired a block of workers' flats in Kensington which she converted into accommodation for retired professional women (known as the Campden Hill Chambers, Kensington). The rooms were let at an affordable rate, between 2s. 6d. and 4s. per week, which ensured they were constantly over-subscribed.⁹ Due to their popularity, the Trust proposed a purpose-built building designed to house working women and to be built at Oakley Street, which was eventually completed in 1882.¹⁰ Although the rooms were let at the lower end of the market the scheme was self-supporting, and looked to model dwellings corporations for its financial blueprint.¹¹ The model dwellings movement, which began roughly at mid-century, saw private companies build subsidised housing with a promise of a small dividend for investors.¹² Just as companies like the East End Dwellings Company or the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company sought to ameliorate the condition of the city's artisan and industrial classes, so did companies such as the Ladies' Residential Chambers Ltd. and the Ladies' Associated Dwellings Company seek to improve accommodation for the city's working women. However organisations such as the Working Ladies Guild, which financed housing chiefly for middle-class women, were represented as self-sustaining businesses and *not* charities. At this early stage of women's increasing social and professional opportunities it was crucial that women and their organisations be seen as self-sufficient in order to off-set criticism of their unsuitability for these new roles. As Emily Gee notes, these women would have also wished to distance themselves from 'the urban poor who needed philanthropic or municipal assistance in housing themselves and their families'.¹³ This was a class of women who were defined in part by the bestowal of charity, not its receipt. The model dwellings movement, in its insistence on profit margins in order to avoid criticisms of pauperising the poor, thus at least offered a prototype for funding women's housing schemes. The principles of their design, however, would be very different.

9 Emily Gee, 'Where Shall She Live?' The Accommodation of Working Women in the Capital 1875-1925 (unpublished thesis for diploma in building conservation, Architectural Association, 2007), p. 40.

10 Elizabeth Crawford, *Enterprising Women* (London: Francis Boutle, 2002), p. 207.

11 Gee, p. 40.

12 For a more extensive consideration of the model dwellings movement, see Chapter 2.1 of the present work.

13 Gee, p. 45.

The earliest appearances of purpose-built women's dwellings in literature are representations of housing for middle-class women.¹⁴ The rather simple explanation for this is that financing was more easily secured for middle-class women's housing and as a result these buildings began to crop up with regularity by the early eighties. Furthermore, the campaign for women's housing that was launched in the periodical press was initiated by, and written for, middle-class women; this market was closely aligned with the audience for the novels in which we find these residences represented. Perhaps to disassociate these buildings from the model dwellings movement, housing for middle-class and upper-middle-class women was most often described as 'Ladies' Chambers', whereas homes for working-class women were usually referred to as women's hostels or lodging houses. While there was interest in financing projects for housing independent working-class women in the city during the same period, the trajectory of its development was somewhat different. There existed from about mid-century a number of hostels for working-class women operated by charitable Christian organisations like the YWCA or the Girls' Friendly Society. However these were not residences, but rescue homes, and accommodation was to be let temporarily during a period of crisis or emergency. There were a small number of homes for working-class women that developed at the same moment as residences for middle-class women, such as Maude Stanley's Soho Club and Home for Working Girls (1880), but it would not be until after the turn of the century that large-scale hostels – free from moral constraint and religious obligation – would be established for single working-class women.¹⁵ In what follows, I first consider the representation of middle-class women's dwellings in Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of A Prig* (1897) and Annie S. Swan's *A Victory Won* (1895); I then examine a fictionalised portrait of the exchange between the working-class Soho Club and Home for Working Girls and 'Rooms for Ladies' in 'High Class Residential Mansions' in Julia Frankau's *The Heart of a Child* (1908).¹⁶ To review these

14 Zimmern, p. 97.

15 The use of 'girls' rather than 'women' in this instance is consistent with class-inflected language – for instance 'shop girls' or 'factory girls', or a more recent example, 'call girls' – that seeks to diminish women's socio-economic, political, and sexual power. See, for instance, Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988; Republished 1999).

16 'High Class Residential Mansions', *The Times*, 2 September 1897, p. 12.

representations in parallel reveals that purpose-built housing for independent working women responded to a need for domestic security across classes during the period, but also suggests that this demand was not always met evenly.¹⁷

I

By the last decade of the nineteenth century, the single woman living independently in the metropolis was a familiar figure in both the pages of novels and on the city's streets. Once equally the subject of derision and recipient of pity for her unmarried status, the middle-class woman who earned a living under her own steam gradually emerged from under the caricatures of her independence to attest to the advantages of these new social freedoms. She was no longer an old maid, but neither was she a New Woman. According to Emma Liggins, this new figure was the 'bachelor girl' who was 'a permutation of the figure of the Glorified Spinster christened in the *Macmillan's* article of 1888 [and who] indicated the new associations of singleness with Bohemianism, professional work, access to higher education, ladies clubs, and new living space for women in the city', though not generally all at once.¹⁸ Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of a Prig* (1897) features a protagonist whose personality and experiences in many ways fit this template of the bachelor girl. The novel follows the personal development of the young, country-born protagonist, Katharine Austen, who moves to London in search of employment and who resides in one of the city's new purpose-built homes for working women. The 'tomboy daughter of [a country] parson', Katharine Austen is introduced to the reader through her aunt's remonstrance of her tendency to 'lie on the rug like a great boy' while reading.¹⁹ The attention to Katharine's casual gait, the 'latent spirit

17 Martin Dines makes a related argument about the need for domestic security in postwar novels that confront queer domesticity, and I am grateful to Martin for having brought this theme to my attention. See Martin Dines, 'Bringing the Boy Back Home: Queer Domesticity and Egalitarian Relationships in Postwar London Novels', *Literary London Journal*, 10.2 (2013), n.p. <<http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/autumn2013/dines.html>> [accessed 20 November 2013]

18 Emma Liggins, 'Having a Good Time? The Bachelor Girl in 1890s New Woman Fiction', in *Writing Women of the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Adrienne E. Gavin and Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2012), pp. 98-110 (p. 99). See also 'The Glorified Spinster', *Macmillan's Magazine*, 58 (1888), pp. 371-376.

19 Evelyn Sharp, *The Making of a Prig* (London: John Lane, 1897), p. 48; p. 1. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

of revolt in her tone' (2) and her penchant for sitting on furniture unconventionally is strikingly like George Bernard Shaw's gentle caricature of the New Woman, Vivian Warren, who is seen 'striding' about the lawn and who wrangles garden chairs into submission in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* (1893).²⁰ The little scholarship that exists on Sharp's fiction positions her work in the mode of either Suffrage Fiction or the New Woman novel.²¹ In the present analysis I set aside both conventions in order to look afresh at the ways *The Making of a Prig* intervenes in debates about the social status of independent working women at the turn of the twentieth century. More specifically, I examine how this novel creatively reimagines women's dwellings in order to comment on the incongruities that emerged during this period between conventional domestic forms and new social practices.

When Katharine's aunt questions her at the opening of the novel, 'Can you never remember that you are not a boy?', Katharine rejoins, 'I am not likely to forget' and continues in an explanation that introduces the novel's conflict between necessity and expectation:

I should not be sticking around in this stupid old place if I were. I should be working hard for daddy, so that he could live with his books and be happy, instead of grinding his life away for people who only want all they can get out of him. What's the use of being a girl? Things are so stupidly arranged, it seems to me! (3)

Yet Katharine's spirit of independence – which eventually propels her to London where she finds a home in ladies' chambers – is compromised by her experience of independence. If her character is here relentlessly self-assured, living out this self-determination unfurls the mythology around bachelor girls and new women. Both Emma Liggins and Wendy Parkins suggest that many novels which pivot on women's experience of the city, in Liggins's words, 'use much more depressing descriptions of urban living than the supposed "reality" to underwrite their heroines' struggles for

20 George Bernard Shaw, 'Mrs. Warren's Profession', *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams, 1934), pp. 61-92 (p. 62).

21 For instance, Jane Eldridge Miller discusses Sharp's 'Suffrage Stories' in *Rebel Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p.127-128. Angela V. John also refers to Sharp as a suffrage writer in *Rebel Woman, 1869-1955* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009) and in 'Behind Locked Doors: Evelyn Sharp, Suffragist and Rebel Journalist', *Women's History Review*, 12.1 (2003), 5-13 (p. 6). Kate Krueger refers to Sharp as a 'New Woman' novelist in 'Evelyn Sharp's Working Women and the Dilemma of Romance', *Women's Writing*, 19.4 (2012), 563-583 (p. 564). If Sharp is considered otherwise, it is as a children's writer.

independence and the new forms of subjectivity this will entail'.²² These 'depressing descriptions' are a central aspect of *The Making of a Prig*, and yet their inclusion does not romanticise the struggle for independence, nor does it generalise women's experience in order to present its protagonist as heroic or triumphant. At the novel's centre is a concern with what Liggins refers to as the development of 'new forms of subjectivity'; but more precisely, new subjectivities that cannot be reconciled to conventional forms.²³ In many instances in this novel, these new subjectivities remain formless or half-formed on account of the persistence of behavioural expectation and social habit. In a consideration of Sharp's *Yellow Book* short fiction, Kate Krueger makes the related comment that these narratives investigate 'the personal challenges women face when they transform themselves into career women'.²⁴ In *The Making of a Prig*, the protagonist's self-assured independence is compromised (and a new subjectivity evinced) by the failure of broader social systems to support her self-determination.

Like her historical counterparts, Katharine Austen's relocation to London is made possible by changes to the labour market. Emily Gee, who has produced the only extended study of women's housing during this period, notes that the number of women engaged in work was comparable to statistics from a century earlier, but the *kinds* of work women were doing changed.²⁵ As a number of scholars have indicated, more women were involved in clerical and professional positions; however Gee makes the important point that this 'burgeoning community of women workers' created 'a major spatial and moral challenge', which was addressed by the construction of housing for working women.²⁶ Many women were, as Deborah Nord has noted, compelled to earn a living on account of having no other source of financial support, but the protagonist of *The Making of a*

22 Liggins, p. 99. Wendy Parkins makes a related point in *Mobility and Modernity in Women's Novels, 1850-1930* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 2-3.

23 On this subject see also Emma Liggins, "'The Life of a Bachelor Girl in the Big City': Selling the Single Lifestyle to Readers of *Woman* and the *Young Woman* in the 1890s", *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40.3 (2007), 216-238.

24 Krueger, p. 564.

25 Emily Gee, "'Where Shall She Live?': Housing the New Working Woman in Late Victorian and Edwardian London", in *Living, Leisure and Law: Eight Building Types in England 1880-1941*, ed. by Geoff Brandwood (Reading: Spire, 2010), pp. 89-109 (p. 89).

26 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Prig longs for independence and intellectual diversion more than she wants for money.²⁷ Before Katharine leaves her father's home in the fictional village of Ivingdon, she arranges to rent a room at 'a certain home for working gentlewomen, near Edgware Road' (86). Writing to her childhood friend Ted she explains that the residence 'seems respectable, and it is certainly cheap' and with these arrangements set she feels she is doing something 'splendid and heroic' (86). Her idealism is quashed when she arrives at the 'well-worn doorstep' of 10 Queens Crescent, Marylebone, where the east wind blows 'dirty pieces of paper against the iron railings' (90). Katharine is greeted by a maid, who she reflects was only in place 'to support the advertisement that this was a home' (90). Before long, 'the heroic notions that had sustained her for weeks were vanishing' (90). The dismal and uninviting nature of the building falls squarely into a long tradition of gloomy representations of women's housing that reaches from the construction of the single woman's home as 'a brick and mortar funeral', as is the case of Miss Wade in Charles Dickens's *Little Dorrit* (1857), to a depiction of the gritty reality of the independent woman's struggle as experienced by Mary Erle in Ella Hepworth Dixon's *The Story of a Modern Woman* (1894) who contends with a 'grimy back yard'.²⁸ The representation of Queens Crescent's cheerlessness make use of this convention, but to a different purpose than to simply comment on the unhappy lives of the city's single women. In Sharp's novel the building's bleak character is used to draw out the incongruity between expectation and necessity – or more specifically in this case, representation and experience. Both the architectural design of the building, and the description of the building in advertisements and prospectuses, rely on the symbolism of conventional domesticity. In Katharine's experience, however, these buildings do not exhibit the usual comforts of conventional middle-class homes. Katharine suspects that the maid's role is not custodial; she functions instead to 'support the advertisement that this was a home' (90). At Queen's Crescent, the forms of traditional domesticity conceal the unconventional lives of the building's inhabitants. These forms also frustrate the

27 Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 216.

28 Charles Dickens, *Little Dorrit* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1880), pp. 330-1; Ella Hepworth Dixon, *The Story of a Modern Woman* (London: Cassell, 1894), p. 108.

residents, whose lives would be made easier without such recourse to traditional domesticity. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that the impulse to rehearse these conventions in new spaces produces the restlessness which characterises the women's dwelling and its inhabitants in this novel. It is not simply a matter of the insufficiency of these specific bricks and mortar.

The 'advertisement that this was a home' (90) originates in a prospectus that Katharine consults before she arrives, one which evidently misrepresents the establishment. When Katharine finds herself 'alone with her two boxes in a curtained corner of a dingy room' (95) a shorthand clerk in the neighbouring compartment comments, 'Well, it is not much like the prospectus, is it?', at which point 'Katharine remembered the plausible statements of the prospectus, and broke into a laugh' (96). Throughout the chapter, residents of Queens Crescent refer to this deceptive prospectus in a citational way that, for the reader, ironises the disparity between representation and experience. For the purpose of attracting residents in order to finance the project, the home for gentlewomen is advertised in the prospectus to be akin to the middle-class homes from which its residents were drawn. For instance, when Katharine asks, 'Where are the newspapers?', another resident replies with a laugh: 'In the prospectus; never saw them anywhere else!' (98). The conversation continues among several of the residents:

'It's like the baths, and the boots, and everything else.'

'Surely, the bath-room is not a fallacy?' exclaimed Katharine in dismay.

'Oh, there is one down in the basement; but all the water has to be boiled for it, so only three people can have a bath every evening. You have to put your name down in a book; and your turn comes in about fortnight.'

'And the boots?' said Katharine, suppressing a sigh.

'You have to clean your own, that's all. They're supposed to provide the blacking and brushes; but, my eye, what brushes! Of course you get used to it after a bit. When you get to your worst, you will probably wear them dirty.' (99)

The prospectus constructs Queens Crescent as a dwelling that provides all of the comforts of a middle-class home. In this scene, the residents' unfulfilled expectations call attention to the discordance between representation and reality. In so doing, they locate their disappointment not

merely as a response to the lack of middle-class comfort, but rather as a consequence of the incongruity between the expectation of convention and the reality of experience. Their overwhelming dissatisfaction is not a consequence of having to perform certain domestic tasks or provide for themselves; after all, the women 'get used to it after a bit' (99). The novel contests the popular belief that single, middle-class working women were miserable simply on account of having eschewed the domestic conventions of coupledness. This, as suggested, was most often symbolised by insufficient or insanitary dwellings. While many of these women would have no doubt been discouraged by the change of economic and social position that accompanied their independence, the novel communicates that their agitation is not merely a bourgeois reaction to changed circumstances. Their cynicism is born of the paradox of their independence, one which was highlighted earlier in this chapter: for women's self-determination to carry beyond individual independence, new social and material systems of support – or what I have referred to as infrastructure – needed to be in place. The building at Queens Crescent is indeed a new domestic form, but its capacity to support its inhabitants' independence is compromised by its relentless capitulation to the image of the conventional middle-class home. This important observation, that independent working women were being offered the very superannuated domestic conventions that they sought to eschew, departs significantly from contemporaneous novels on related subjects. Although George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) is attentive to the ways that women's lives were circumscribed by the economic necessity of marriage, and correspondingly their adherence to domestic convention, this novel is preoccupied with the ways that women suffer when they reject the security of either economic or romantic stability. Simply stated, while independent women populate the pages of Gissing's novel, not one of them seems to enjoy her independence. Conversely, in Sharp's novel the women who live at Queens Crescent value their independence and also fare well emotionally (if not always economically) despite their struggle against conventionality.

As social practice began to change, conventional domestic arrangements revealed themselves to be insufficient in supporting the development of new social forms. While sitting in the common room on the evening of her arrival at Queens Crescent, Katharine

looked round the silent occupants of the room, – some of them too tired to do anything but lounge about, some of them reading novelettes, some of them mending stockings. She wondered if her existence would become like theirs, – a daily routine, with just enough money to support life, and not enough to enjoy its pleasures; enough energy to get through its toil, and not enough to enjoy its leisure. (100)

Like the earlier scene that referred to the domestic dreariness of the single woman's experience, here the problems of finance and labour are depicted in a way not dissimilar to the representation of the working classes in the mid-century Condition-of-England novel. This description, for instance, brings to mind Elizabeth Gaskell's representation of the urban poor half a century earlier. Yet in novels such as *Mary Barton* (1848) working-class characters are even refused these evenings of exhaustion, forced to '[take] to their sewing' in order 'earn a few pence by working over hours'; and in *Ruth* (1853) it is not the protagonist's lament but her ambition 'to lodge very cheaply, and earn [her] livelihood by taking in plain sewing, and perhaps a little dressmaking' after she gives birth to an illegitimate child.²⁹ While I return to questions about the relationship between classes later in this chapter, what is important here is the sense of ambivalence that is attendant with the women's position as residents of this dwelling: they are given enough economic freedom to live independently, but they are socially isolated on account of this freedom. Their social marginalisation and the lack of 'leisure' time are impediments to developing networks that would help to challenge restrictive conventionalities.

The disparity between representation and reality made apparent by the prospectus, with its emphasis on conventional domesticity, corresponds to a similar preoccupation with domesticity in the design and organisation of most middle-class women's residences built during the late

²⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton* (Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1849), p. 221; p. 143. Elizabeth Gaskell, *Ruth*, Vol 2 (London: Chapman Hall, 1853), p. 54.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Ladies' Associated Dwellings Company, which formed in 1888, sought to address the 'need for comfortable and cheap homes, securing privacy and respectability, and suitable for a gentlewoman'.³⁰ Their first project was Sloane Gardens House which was opened that year (which was also the year 'A Frenchwoman in London' was published) at 52 Lower Sloane Street and fees were set to be roughly 2s. 6d. a week.³¹ The building was constructed using the standard domestic material of red brick, and was accented by rubbed brick and terracotta dressings and its rich ornamentation which, Gee argues, aligned it with 'the wealthy mansion blocks in the area'.³² Internally the building could accommodate 150 women in either bed-sitting rooms or cubicles and also offered communal areas such as a library, music room, and dining room. The red brick and heavy ornamentation was clearly an effort to visually associate this large-scale home for women with the vernacular conventions of single-family dwellings; as was, no doubt, the inclusion of the library and music room. However the high-spec of this design combined with its location in the affluent neighbourhood of Sloane Square (chosen for its convenient location for women who worked in the West End) pushed the rents to a rate nearly three times that of the Oakley Street Flats.³³ Therefore in an effort to align the building's design with conventional domestic patterns, the Ladies' Associated Dwellings Company failed to provide accommodation for those who needed it most: working women with no guaranteed income. This is not a criticism of the company's desire to include the conventional features of a middle-class home in their design. As stated, these companies operated as businesses and therefore relied on the appeal of their product to attract residents; it is unlikely that Queens Crescent would have secured so much interest had it advertised that baths were only available once a fortnight. It is, more importantly, the inability of such schemes to reconcile domestic conventions with new architectural forms and social practices that is important for this discussion. This relentless appeal to domestic convention sometimes frustrated the development of new practices, but also produced the 'new forms of subjectivity' and

30 Qtd. in Crawford, p. 207.

31 Crawford, p. 207. See also Gee (2010), pp. 91-92.

32 Gee (2010), p. 92.

33 Ibid. See also Gee (2007), pp. 40-41.

'personal challenges' to which Emma Liggins and Kate Krueger refer.

The representation of Queens Crescent in *The Making of a Prig* was no doubt informed by Sharp's own experience of living in a similar building after first moving to London in 1894 out of an obligation to earn her own living. The author remembers being introduced to the artist James Whistler at a dinner party, who laughed when he was told she 'was a writer and lived in a flat of [her] own', then derisively remarked: 'Not understood at home, I suppose? [...] No scope for the development of your own personality?'.³⁴ Although it was nearly a decade before her engagement with the radical politics of the Women's Social and Political Union, and later the United Suffragists which she helped to establish, these early experiences exposed her to the contradictions of women's independence which she later sought to repair through political engagement. Although Sharp was surprised at Whistler's 'old-fashioned attitude towards women' given his radicalism in other respects, she notes that his reaction was born of a 'very common prejudice when [she] first threw down her challenge to convention'.³⁵ A daily pupil in Bedford Square who was the orphan daughter of the architect J.D. Sedding provided Sharp with income enough to obtain a room at Brabazon House, Home for Ladies at 8-9 South Crescent just off Store Street in Bloomsbury.³⁶ In addition to private tutoring Sharp lectured at schools during the day and remembers: 'in the evenings I wrote in my curtained cubicle, with the bed for a table and the candle for a lamp after the gas was turned off at eleven'.³⁷ Sharp's autobiography *Unfinished Adventure* (1933) provides few details of the interior of Brabazon House, and if it serves for the basis of the building in *The Making of a Prig* it is moved from Bloomsbury to Marylebone. Given that Queens Crescent in *The Making of a Prig* is at least ostensibly a home for 'gentlewomen', and that the novel's protagonist occupies a slightly higher

34 Evelyn Sharp, *Unfinished Adventure* (London: John Lane, 1933), p. 53.

35 Ibid., p. 53.

36 Brabazon House, Home for Ladies was the initial project of the Brabazon House Co. Ltd which was established by Lady Brabazon, Countess of Meath in 1890. The company would later design and commission a larger purpose-built residence for working women (known as 'Lady Brabazon's Home for Gentlewomen') that was designed by R. Stephen Ayling and which opened on Moreton Street, Pimlico in 1902. Another more upscale residence, Hopkinson House, was opened on the other side of the Vauxhall bridge in 1905. See Mary Jane Brabazon, *The Diaries of Mary Countess of Meath* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1928), p.10. See also Gee (2007), p. 69, n154.

37 Sharp, p. 55.



Figure 9: Chenies Street Chambers, Bloomsbury (built 1888; photograph 2013).

Source: Author

social position than did Sharp herself, it makes sense that the building was moved to the more respectable West End address. Having stayed at Brabazon House in Bloomsbury, Sharp would have been aware of the more up-market Chenies Street Chambers that had been built in 1889 and were located only a block away. The Chenies Street Chambers (Figure 8) were the first project of the Ladies' Residential Chambers Ltd., which had been formed by the designer Agnes Garrett (the sister of Millicent Garrett Fawcett) in February 1888 – only one month after The Ladies' Residential Dwelling Association was established. Like Sloane Gardens House, the Chenies Street Chambers make use of standard red brick in order to underscore the building's association with vernacular domestic architecture. The composite Queen Anne style was considered suitably feminine by architect J.M. Brydon, as it allowed large-scale structures to retain the character of

small-scale buildings by way of features like sash windows, gables and a hooded shell doorcase.³⁸ The Ladies' Residential Chambers Ltd. followed this successful scheme with a similar building at York Street in Marylebone which was completed in 1892.³⁹ Both the Chenies Street Chambers and the York Street Chambers were arranged in a series of two-, three-, and four-room flats, each one self-contained (meaning the provision of a WC). These buildings were perhaps the city's best appointed and most comfortable women's residences, and were therefore also the most exclusive; residents were professionals who were drawn from mostly from the upper middle classes.

It is clear that the women's dwellings at Queens Crescent in *The Making of a Prig* were not intended for the established professionals or upper-middle-class women who found homes at the Chenies Street and York Street Chambers. Yet the prestige of these buildings and the relative luxury in which their residents found themselves did not necessarily make it any easier to reconcile domestic conventions with new practices. Elizabeth Crawford notes, based on the records of the Chenies Street Chambers, that residents complained about *everything*: 'the staffing, the food, the charges, the provision for their bicycles, [and] the maintenance of the fabric in their room'.⁴⁰ It seems that at both York Street and Chenies Street it was not only the quality and cost of meals to which residents objected, but also that the dining charge was compulsory, which thinly disguised the expectation that residents would dine together each evening in the communal dining-room. The internal accommodation of the building ensured each resident would have had at least a bedroom and a sitting room, which enabled a level of privacy that was understood to be necessary for middle-class women to maintain respectability. Nevertheless residents were expected to dine communally in the understanding that this would foster a level of domestic sociability that was expected of women. Several years later when the housing campaigner Emily Hobhouse published in *Nineteenth Century* a survey of women's experience living in such accommodation she found that many residents left these dwellings on account of the oppressive rules and interfering officials;

38 Crawford, pp. 209-210.

39 Gee (2007), p. 43.

40 Crawford, p. 210.

one woman in particular responded: 'I am leaving because of the irritating rules. They should avoid treating tenants as a cross between a pauper lunatic and a rebellious schoolgirl'.⁴¹ Although Hobhouse applauds the efforts of organisations like the Ladies' Residential Chambers Company to solve the problem of women's housing, in her article she concludes that such residences 'do not adjust and re-adjust themselves to keep pace with modern requirements'.⁴²

The Making of a Prig foregrounds the communal dining arrangement as an experience that was especially at variance with conventions of domesticity. As stated, at many women's residences communal dining was enforced by charging women an obligatory monthly subscription fee, which meant residents were unlikely to dine elsewhere unless they had substantial funds at their disposal. Management thought the arrangement of communal meals was necessary, as it was expected that women would form social groups to fill the void of the family relationships they had left behind. Yet the novel's representation of these communal meals reveals the fallacy of this theory; indeed, many women were uninterested in socialising with other residents, and resented the enforced charade of companionability. Although several contemporary articles about women's residences feature images of communal dining rooms – often located in the basement of these buildings – that represent the experience as a cheerful and lively occasion, like the image of the dining room at Brabazon House that appeared in the *Girl's Own Paper* in 1902 (Figure 9), Katharine finds the dining room of Queens Crescent rather different:

The room she had entered was a bare-looking one, though clean enough, and better lighted than the hall outside. Long tables were placed across it, and around these, on wooden chairs, sat some twenty or thirty girls of various ages some of whom were talking, and others reading, as they occupied themselves with their tea. (91)

41 Crawford, pp. 215-216.

42 Ibid.

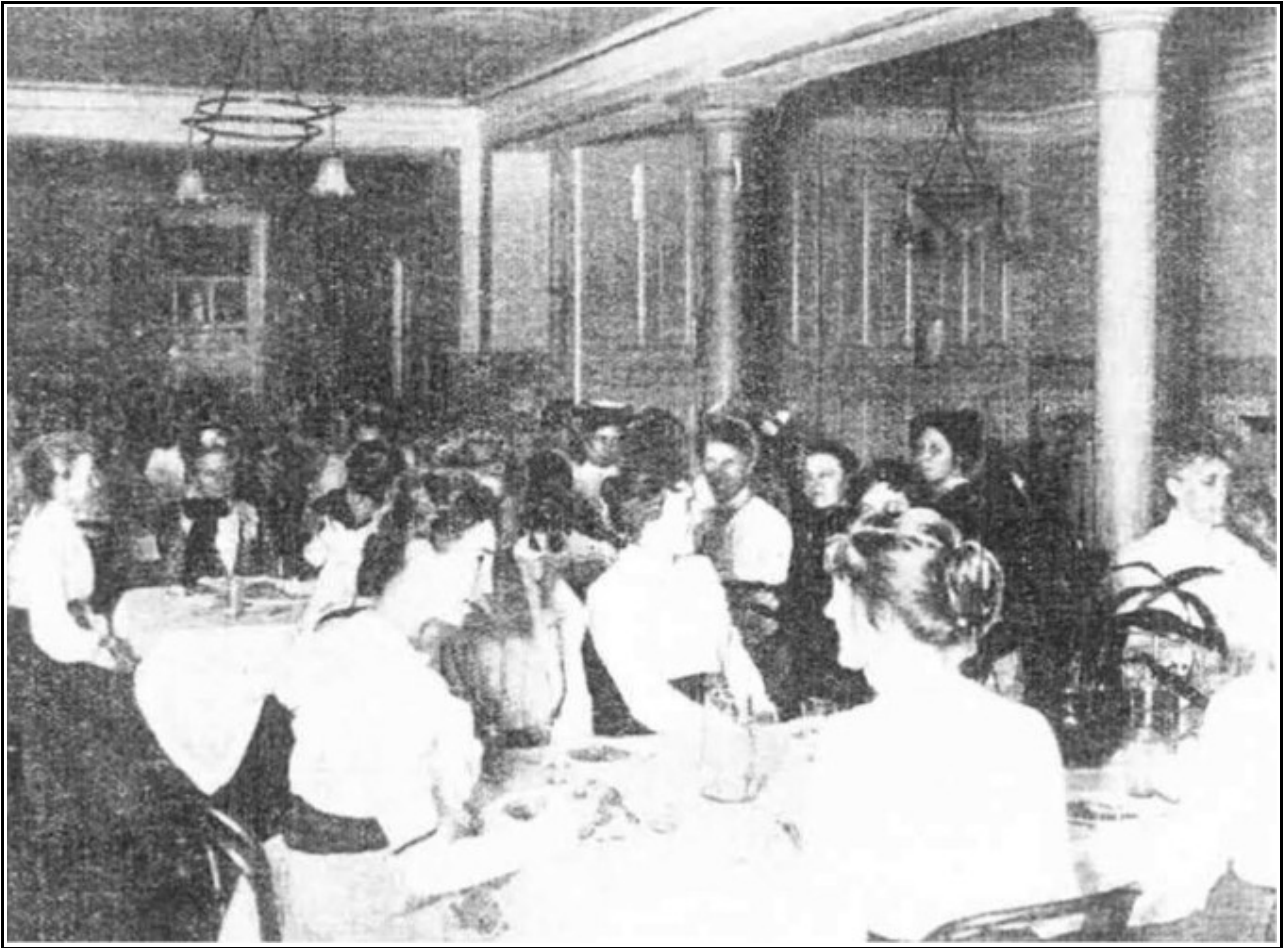


Figure 9: Dining Hall, Brabazon House, Pimlico (image c. 1902).

Source: Emily Gee, 'Where Shall She Live?' The Accommodation of Working Women in the Capital 1875-1925 (unpublished thesis for diploma in building conservation, Architectural Association, 2007), p. 131.

Unlike the circular tables and the sociability of the Brabazon House image, the 'bare-looking' refectory tables in the novel suggest a community that is not entirely unsociable, but certainly less social than that represented by the image in *Girl's Own Paper*. It is also an environment in which private acts, like reading, occur in a traditionally communal space. Katharine's first meal at Queens Crescent follows a convention of social induction, most often found in school or college fiction, which introduces the protagonist (and thereby the reader) to the methods of the new community into which they are being integrated. While in most novels this convention initiates intimacy, here the building and the community retain their anonymity. Katharine enquires about a vacant seat and is told by another resident who was 'friendly in a raw sort of way' (92) that the chair '[i]sn't

anybody's; none of them are, unless the plate is turned upside down' (91-2). The woman, who is reading *Pitman's Phonetic Journal* while finishing her dinner, notices Katharine's perplexed response to the unorthodox manner of setting the table and continues, 'You have to get your own tea from the urn over there, and collect your food from all the other tables' (92), which Katharine manages with some difficulty and much dismay. At Queens Crescent it is not only the custom in which dinner is served that is irregular, but also the hour. Katharine asks the woman '[i]f it isn't rather late for tea', and has the arrangement explained to her in detail:

'It always goes on until seven; most of them don't get back from the office until this time, you see.'

'What office?' Asked Katharine, who did not see.

'Any office,' returned the girl staring round at her. 'Post office generally, or a place in the city, something like that. Some of them are shorthand clerks, like me, – it's shorter hours and better paid as a rule; but it is getting overcrowded, like everything else.'

'Do you like it?' Asked Katharine. The girl stared again. The possibility of liking one's work had never occurred to her before.

'Of course not, but we have to grin and bear it, like the food here and everything else.' (92-3)

The same set of conditions – specifically, changes to the city's system of labour – that has motivated the construction of these buildings has also destabilised social conventions within these buildings. The working day has caused disruption to the daily schedule and, despite management's attempt to marshall its residents into a performance of domesticity, it has proved impossible in practice and the dinner hour has been eclipsed altogether. In Eliza Lynn Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* (1888) a similar phenomenon occurs when Perdita secures a job at the Post Office Savings Bank and is not only unable to return home in time for the family meal, but is also unable to indicate whatever time she might be home, requiring her mother to readjust her notions of feminine propriety. However Perdita's ambition is simply the glory of self-sufficiency, whereas Katharine's interlocutor makes an important comment: professional work is not necessarily a reward in its own right. And yet this revelation is unlike that found in a category of novels, popular at this time, which sought to

dissuade young middle-class women away from work and urban life as a moral project. For instance in Flora Klickmann's *The Ambitions of Jenny Ingram* (1907) the young and naïve protagonist of the novel's title ventures into London to establish herself as a journalist and instead endures an unpleasant plunge into personal and professional atrophy only to finally collapse at the entrance of an East End women's refuge. She is, however, magically revived by a proposal of marriage. Even more forward-thinking authors such as Emily Symonds (who wrote under the pseudonym George Paston) included in her novel *A Modern Amazon* (1894) a cautionary tale about a woman who leaves her husband only to find that living alone in lodgings is terribly dull. However in *The Making of a Prig*, Katharine and the other residents 'get used to it after a bit' (99) or 'grin and bear it' (93). Although the independent working woman's life is unidealised in this novel, so is every other aspect of the protagonist's existence – including her engagement at the novel's end. Katharine agrees to a marriage proposal believing that she has 'simply got to try the experiment, and chance the rest', although she acknowledges capitulating to marriage is 'ridiculous' (409). This dispassionate romantic encounter at the novel's conclusion makes clear that Sharp's ambition is not to offer a sentimental portrait of the heroism of nineteenth-century working women. Instead, *The Making of a Prig* offers an incisive representation of a social stalemate that emerged at the end of the century, which I have suggested is the consequence of the endurance of old forms and expectations that complicate the emergence of new practices. After their conversation about dining practices, Katharine is encouraged by the woman sitting next to her to 'try the treacle; it is safer. You cannot go wrong with treacle. The jam's always suspicious; you find plum stones in the strawberries, and so on' (93). Despite her humourless tone, Katharine can only feel that the woman's 'cynical view of the food is so awfully funny!' (93). Like the prospectus, it is the jam's deception, rather than the jam itself, that produces disappointment. This experience of dissimilitude extends beyond inanimate objects: when Katharine finally meets Miss Jenkins, the building's matron who is 'a little white-haired lady [...] in a lace cap and a black silk apron', Katharine thinks to herself that,

'[Miss Jenkins] has the captivating manner of an imposter' (102). The reader is not given reason to believe that the matron is personally deceptive, but instead her very presence in such a building seems anachronistic. In fact, the only way that Katharine is able to reconcile herself to the matron's superannuated appearance is to construct it as an explanation for earlier incongruities: 'Well, it accounts for the prospectus' (102), she thinks to herself. It is significant that at this transitional moment, when domestic design and practice were undergoing a process of reorganisation, that it is the figure of tradition and convention who is the imposter. If women were as yet unable to fully define or inhabit new domestic forms, older forms were nevertheless understood to be inadequate and out of place.

Women's residences were bound by architectural and social forms of conventionality in order to prosper as business models, and yet this pretence jarred with the activity for which these buildings were designed. Notorious detractors like Eliza Lynn Linton and Dora Greenwell argued that women were unable to live together because – in Linton's words – it perverted the course of 'natural destiny', but a number of residents perceptively identified that in certain ways segregation in 'hen communities' or 'pusseries' only further marginalised women.⁴³ Some residents suggested that men and women should form unmarried cooperatives and live 'on equal footing', a radical scheme that W.T. Stead had proposed in *Women's Herald* in 1893, while others lamented that allowing male visitors or outsiders to dine at the buildings would at the very least improve the food.⁴⁴ While *The Making of a Prig* expresses many grievances about women's residences and articulates ideas for their improvement, this discourse is not necessarily unified nor does it identify a central problem that can be addressed for quick improvement. Instead, the novel's attention to housing reveals a curious vacancy, for the problem of women's housing – despite the efforts of companies like the Ladies' Associated Dwellings Company – still needed solving. Building

43 This is a theme that runs throughout much of Linton's journalism, however, her fiction often contradicts this point. Eliza Lynn Linton [attributed in print to Charles Dickens], 'Rights and Wrongs of Women', *Household Words*, 1 April 1854, pp. 158-161 (p. 159). See also Dora Greenwell, 'Our Single Women', *North British Review*, February 1862, pp. 62-87. The expressions used to refer to women's communities are documented in Hobhouse, p. 481.

44 Hobhouse, p. 482; William T. Stead, 'Cooperative Homes for the Unmarried', *Women's Herald*, 13 April 1893, pp. 113-114.

practices struggled to keep up with the rapidly shifting behaviours and circumstances around gender and labour at the century's end. As a result, buildings like Queens Crescent in *The Making of a Prig* seemed to amplify, just as much as they sought to address, women's inequality. The novel expresses the exasperatingly slow process of social and political reform in its pages by representing the friction between middle-class domestic conventions and the emergence of new practices. It is, consequently, a struggle that is palpable for the reader. The novel steers clear of abject cynicism, and instead suggests that outmoded customs can also be generative – particularly if they highlight the need for broader social reforms. Therefore the 'experiment' (409) of Katharine's marriage at the novel's end can be interpreted as progressive rather than conclusive. In fact, the novel self-consciously identifies the irony of its own conclusion: Katharine points out, 'isn't it ridiculous [...] after all our views about marriage and so on, – to end behaving just like anyone else who never had any views at all?' (409-10). The question, of course, raises again the disparity between form and practice: marriage promises to make Katharine 'just like anyone else' – but her 'views' will differentiate her in its practice. The novel articulates the alliance between physical structures, like women's residences, and social structures, which are established by practices such as marriage, and while acknowledging the unfavourable aspects of both, suggests such outdated forms can only be recuperated through use.

The Kailyard Comes to London:
Ladies' Chambers and the Romance Narrative in Annie S. Swan's *A Victory Won* (1895)

Emily Hobhouse's survey 'Women Workers: How They Live and How They Wish to Live' reveals that many residents of women's dwellings responded to over-management by deliberately withdrawing from the domestic community of these buildings. As indicated, despite the advantages of this form of housing many women decided to leave on account of the social restrictions and intervening officials. In an article for *Women's Herald* a 'special commissioner' visits Sloane

Gardens House and the Oakley Street Flats to investigate 'Where the Unmarried Live'. The author comments that the buildings are 'always filled with residents, and numerous applications have to be refused for want of room', but nevertheless life in the buildings could be surprisingly solitary.⁴⁵ One resident at Sloane Gardens House explains to the author that her first experience of the residence was 'intense loneliness'. Although many women seemed to have formed small coteries with whom to 'chat [...] merrily' over dinner, others were 'glum and exclusive' and took no notice of the newcomer.⁴⁶ The woman soon discovers that the 'majority of the residents stay in their rooms in the evening' and claims that her desperation led her to 'rebel [...] against the spirit of indifference'. The newcomer's rebellious behaviour is, however, comically reserved: 'One morning I noticed a girl at the breakfast table looking very ill. I asked if there was anything I could do for her. That was the breaking of the ice and we are now good friends'.⁴⁷ The resident's emotive language, set alongside what seems to be an almost instinctual and certainly very restrained gesture, reminds readers of the anxiety that could attend these new social situations. The majority of these women would not have had any experience of collective living, as girls' institutional schooling was at this time still developing.⁴⁸ The social campaigner Alice Zimmern – who in fact championed the cause for women's dwellings – explains that the experiment of 'co-flatting' or the sharing of a three- or four-room flat between two women 'does not seem to be a success'.⁴⁹ Zimmern also suggests that the system of sharing is 'apt to lead to disagreement on the question of service, the use of pantry, etc.', and that it simply 'introduces an unnecessary complication in life'.⁵⁰ Provision for social privacy was, Zimmern notes, necessary for middle-class women to retain status and respectability.⁵¹ While journalists both in favour of and against housing defined along gendered principles often claimed

45 'Where the Unmarried Live', *Woman's Herald*, 20 April 1893, p. 131.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Jane Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle-Class Families in England, 1850-1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), pp. 147-153. Alison Ravetz makes a similar point about the decanting of elderly tenants from council housing in the post-war period. See Alison Ravetz, *The Place of Home: English Domestic Environments, 1914-2000* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1995), p. 45.

49 Zimmern, p. 98-99.

50 Ibid.

51 Ibid., p. 97.

this situation as evidence of women's congenital inability to live together, Zimmern suggests that these disagreements were 'common to model dwellings as well as to Ladies' Chambers'.⁵² She points out that the expectation for middle-class women to adapt to shared domestic facilities was not dissimilar to another social group that also may not have had experiences of institutional living: the working and artisan classes. Both groups were also more likely to live in inadequate accommodation due to various social and financial pressures. When the Special Commissioner of 'Where the Unmarried Live' asks a resident about the social situation at the Oakley Street Flats she receives a response from a resident that is similar to what she heard of Sloane Gardens House: the tenants have 'numerous friends in London' but 'prefer not to know their neighbours'.⁵³

While some inhabitants of women's housing responded with hostility to the obligatory communities that were prescribed by many residences, it is important to point out that many women *did* establish elective communities and form close friendships with other residents. As demonstrated in the previous section, the success of women's housing schemes was not ensured simply by their existence; their construction revealed the need for broader social changes that would recognise and accommodate individuals whose lives were not defined by conventional family structures. One of the ways that women were able to negotiate this ideology and 'define themselves in terms beyond those of the nuclear family', as Vicinus notes, was by creating supportive communities and establishing close friendships.⁵⁴ Annie Shepherd Swan, despite her reputation as an author who 'strongly support[ed] conventional notions of womanhood' (which Beth Dickson claims 'has led to criticism from sociologists and historians that her books were instruments of social control'), expresses the importance of these close friendships for the development of new social practices in her novel *A Victory Won* (1895).⁵⁵ The novel's familiar narrative is centred upon a rebellious young woman, the daughter of a wealthy country gentleman,

⁵² Zimmern, p. 98.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Vicinus, p. 5.

⁵⁵ Beth Dickson, 'Annie S. Swan and O. Douglas: Legacies of the Kailyard', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 329-346 (p. 329).

who is compelled by her father's tyrannical behaviour to move to London where she is required to earn her own living. In its representation of the picturesque Scottish countryside *A Victory Won* falls into the tradition of the Kailyard School: a sentimental – and to some like Dickson, a 'falsely sentimental' – style of writing about rural life in Scotland that emerged in last decade of the nineteenth century in response to realism.⁵⁶ Although Swan is mostly forgotten today, she was one of the nineteenth century's best-known novelists and, according to Edmund Gardiner, as far as her achievements in serial fiction were concerned, '[n]othing like it had been seen since Dickens or Trollope [...], her output was phenomenal'.⁵⁷ Dickson notes that during a career that began in 1883 and lasted until her death fifty years later, Swan wrote 162 novels under her own name, at least forty under the pseudonym David Lyall, and countless pieces of journalism, some of which appear under the name 'Evelyn Orchard'. In 1893 she was invited to become the chief contributor and editor of *The Woman at Home*, and her popularity was great enough that the publication was subtitled 'Annie Swan's Magazine'.⁵⁸ In 1934 she released the best-selling autobiography *My Life*. In addition to her literary output, Gardiner notes, she was also at one point Mayor of the English town of Hertford, was in the War Service in France during WWI, and worked with Herbert Hoover for two years while travelling in the United States.⁵⁹ Swan was well aware of her standing as a popular novelist for it was a position she professionally cultivated, recognising that in the literary marketplace, as she put it, 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'.⁶⁰ Yet she was not beyond feeling hurt when Margaret Oliphant, a writer whose work Swan greatly admired, dismissed her representations of Scotland as 'silly' and even 'pernicious' in their naivety.⁶¹ On one level, *A Victory Won* can most certainly be read as a somewhat mawkish tale of filial piety: the central character, Eleanor Kerr, inherits her father's hot temper and obstinacy and in her ambition to prove herself to

56 J.A. Cuddon, 'Kailyard School', *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, 4th edn (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 441-442; Dickson, p. 329.

57 Edmund F. Gardiner, 'Annie S. Swan – forerunner of modern popular fiction', *Library Review*, 24.6 (1974), 251-254 (p. 252).

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid., p. 254.

60 Gardiner, p. 253; Dickson, p. 230.

61 Qtd. in Dickson, p. 241.

him neglects her dying mother. Meanwhile Eleanor's brother develops alcoholism, and nearly kills his father – who is also an alcoholic – in a fist fight at the novel's conclusion. In this revisionist version of the parable of the prodigal son, Eleanor returns home before her mother's death in time to promise that she will care for her father. This theme of women's sacrifice, as Dickson notes, is common to most of Swan's novels – and although Eleanor does not marry, she is effectively placed in the role of wife without its emotional advantages.⁶² Yet the novel is unique in the way it represents the protagonist's experience of middle-class women's housing. Unlike most journalistic accounts of these residences or the representations found in *George Eastmont*, *Wanderer* and *The Making of a Prig* that concentrate on failures of these buildings to live up to middle-class expectations of home, *A Victory Won* focuses on the supportive and enabling features of women's housing.

Although Katharine Austen, the protagonist of *The Making of a Prig*, receives some initial guidance from several professional women who live at Queens Crescent, their relationships are superficial and remain largely undeveloped in the novel. The person to whom Katharine is closest, the shorthand clerk Phyllis Hyam, is characterised as faithful and honest; but these qualities are attributed more to her want of sophistication than to her sense of altruism. While Katharine's unconventional behaviour early in the text – for instance sprawling on the rug and climbing fences – does not compromise her attractiveness, Phyllis's frankness and certain distinctive behaviours like whistling define her as coarse; and the descriptions of her 'hot face' (121) make her physically unappealing. Phyllis's behaviour is also associated with her social status. When Katharine arrives at the chambers, she is disappointed that more of the residents were not 'ladies', although she realises such a sentiment is 'awfully snobbish' (94). In *A Victory Won*, Eleanor leaves an old farmhouse in the Howe of Fife in order to follow to London the man her father refuses to allow her to marry. Once she arrives and realises he is only interested in her fortune, from which she has now been disinherited, she is obliged to establish herself as an independent woman and earn her own living.

62 Dickson, p. 336.

Eleanor has the good fortune of being introduced to Frances Sheldon, a woman who rents a three-room flat in the fictional 'Barker Street Chambers'.⁶³ In the serialised version of the novel, which appeared in *The British Weekly* in 1894, the residence is referred to as the 'Chenies Street Chambers' – but Elizabeth Crawford explains that Adeline Sergeant, a 'rival novelist' who herself lived at the Chenies Street Chambers, objected to the use of the name.⁶⁴ This reaction suggests Sergeant's eagerness to establish authority over the building's reputation and representation, although it would be several years before she included the Chenies Street Chambers in her own novel, *Anthea's Way* (1903).⁶⁵ It is somewhat perplexing to imagine on what grounds Sergeant might have otherwise objected, for the 'Barker Street Chambers' and its residents are depicted favourably in Swan's novel. Unlike most representations of middle-class 'bachelor women' who live apart from men's company, Frances Sheldon – who lives at the Barker Street Chambers – is unconventional and independent, but also ebullient and attractive:

Miss Frances Sheldon was not a conventional person. She was sitting at her bachelor breakfast when the knock came to the door. Having no domestic, she opened it herself. She was a young woman of seven-and-twenty; and though she looked her age, there was a certain girlishness in her appearance which would remain with her likely for several years to come. Even her slightly mannish attire was not unbecoming to her, the stiff pink, linen collar, the neat black tie, and the tailor cut of her double-breasted jacket being even fascinating in their way. She wore her hair short, and the crisp brown waves looked as if they were carefully attended to, as indeed they were, Frances Sheldon being very dainty and fastidious in her way. Her speech was a trifle free, as was inevitable, owing to the conditions of her life. (132)

Frances Sheldon does not fall into the conventional 'before' and 'after' caricatures of the independent city woman: the dewy-eyed and over-determined girl, or the cynical and care-worn spinster. She is, instead, nearer the age that Emily Hobhouse found to be the average for women

63 Annie S. Swan, *A Victory Won* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1895), p. 148. Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

64 Crawford, p. 214.

65 Adeline Sergeant, *Anthea's Way* (London: Methuen & Co., 1903). Sergeant published several novels about wage-earning, independent young woman including the partially autobiographical novel *Esther Denison* (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1889). She also includes discussion of model dwellings in the novel *Caspar Brooke's Daughter* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1891).

living in such accommodation: thirty-four years old.⁶⁶ Frances also lives without a domestic servant, although there were provisions for such at the Chenies Street Chambers, which is an indication of her self-reliance. As Sally Ledger and Susan Shapiro both explain, such independent or 'New' women were usually characterised, in Ledger's words, as 'mannish, over-educated, humourless bores' whose femininity was compromised as much by their rational dress as it was by their progressive opinions.⁶⁷ Most often characters who are represented as rebellious and deficient in femininity are rehabilitated by heterosexual romance, as is the case with Rhoda Nunn in George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893), and to an extent this is also true of the protagonist in *The Making of a Prig*. The above sketch of Frances Sheldon bridges such oppositions: the adjective 'mannish' is used to suggest her attractiveness, and the combination of a 'stiff, pink linen collar' and 'neat black tie' is not out of place but is instead 'fascinating' (132). Even her short hair is indicative of fastidiousness and daintiness, rather than signifying a sort of reckless utilitarianism.

In examining Swan's later novels, many of which are concerned with women's suffrage, Jane Eldridge Miller explains that Swan 'carefully emphasises the beauty and "womanliness" of her suffragist heroines'.⁶⁸ This is also common in novels that feature 'rebel women', Eldridge Miller suggests, as writers were often at pains to make their heroines attractive to their readership despite their lack of conventionality. What is interesting about Frances's attractiveness is that she is not the novel's protagonist, but Eleanor's foil; such secondary characters are not typically represented sympathetically in late nineteenth-century fiction and more often feature as cautionary figures that suggest the woman's fate who allows her independence to usurp her femininity. Yet Frances, in addition to being physically attractive and plain-spoken, is light-hearted, quick-witted and

⁶⁶ Hobhouse, p. 480.

⁶⁷ Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 96. See also Susan Shapiro, 'The Mannish New Woman: Punch and its Precursors', *The Review of English Studies*, 42.168 (1991), 510-522. The Rational Dress Movement was committed to making clothing 'more comfortable and hygienic'. Women's undergarments, such as the corset, were given particular attention. See Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles and Activism* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 92.

⁶⁸ Jane Eldridge Miller, *Rebel Women: Feminism, Modernism and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Virago, 1994), p. 139.

charismatic: 'charming, womanly, and true-hearted' (137), as she is described by the friend who arranges for Eleanor to stay at Barker Street. Any enduring misconceptions about the bachelor woman's appearance are set aright after Eleanor moves into Barker Street. Surprised at Frances's attention to matters of appearance, Eleanor questions, 'I thought girls who live like this, so independently, I mean, didn't care how they looked', only to be swiftly repudiated: 'Oh, that's a frightful mistake. I believe when a woman grows careless of her appearance there is something sapping the springs of her welfare' (139). The statement suggests that it is a woman's responsibility to be mindful of her appearance, but it also situates this responsibility alongside broader questions of health and social security. Frances suggests that women who are characterised as visual aberrations to conventional femininity are not degenerate, but are instead victims of social welfare. This argument emerges once more when Eleanor comments glibly that '[c]lothes are not everything', and Frances must remind her that, particularly for women who cannot afford the right garments but cannot abide the wrong ones, '[clothes] are a good deal' (139). In fact, Eleanor Kerr and Katharine Austen are accepted for and rejected from, respectively, positions of employment based on their dress and their attractiveness. While searching for a teaching position Katharine is regularly rejected for the fault of being 'too young' and 'too attractive' (*The Making of a Prig*, 104). In *A Victory Won* Eleanor's attractiveness lands her a position in journalism, but it soon becomes disagreeable when she is subject to the subtle harassment of her seedy employer who demonstrates a level of 'personal interest' that makes Eleanor 'vaguely miserable' (228). This situation occurs at a point in the narrative where Eleanor is staying at Barker Street on her own, and she finds that '[e]xistence in London without that bright, unfailing spirit was a burden rather heavy to be borne, and the evenings in the little flat, which seemed so empty without [Frances], were intolerably long' (228). This intimacy and companionship, inspired by the 'feeling of trust' (141) that Frances engenders, is important to the development of their friendship and without which Eleanor confesses: 'I hate London. It ought to be sunk to the bottom of the sea' (232).

The companionship between Eleanor and Frances that the narrative develops through thoughtful and intimate conversation helps to make the unconventional lodgings at Barker Street into a comfortable home. In *George Eastmont, Wanderer* the ladies' chambers where Mary Cameron resides are 'dull and solitary' (264) and in *The Making of a Prig* the comfort of home is only an 'advertisement' (90), but *A Victory Won* represents these buildings as suitable and desirable. Whereas Katharine was housed in a small cubicle that seems to have been based on Sharp's own experience at Brabazon House, Frances Sheldon resides in a three-room self-contained flat. The Chenies Street Chambers were, as noted in the previous chapter, marketed to professional women who were also often supported by independent means and could afford a self-contained flat with multiple rooms; other buildings like Sloane Gardens House offered, as Alice Zimmern notes, single 'bed-sitting rooms' that were for some women an economic necessity (although most hoped 'to work their way out of it to the two-room stage of existence').⁶⁹ The flat represented in *A Victory Won* therefore has the advantage of floorspace and discrete rooms for different social purposes, all of which helps to advocate for its suitability as a home. Although there is no conventional dining area (the two rooms, it seems, being used as a bedroom and a study), the friend who visits on behalf of Eleanor in order to ask whether she might share accommodation with Frances remarks: 'I had no idea a scullery could be such a cosy place' (133). Similarly, the narrator comments on '[t]he warmth and comfort of the odd little place', and notes that even the 'gas stove glowed cheerily' (133). If the point that Zimmern makes, that having two rooms was seen to be an altogether different stage of existence for women living independently, then Eleanor's presence should threaten to disrupt the 'warmth and comfort' of the 'odd little place' (133). When asked whether she could accommodate another person in her flat, Frances responds: 'Here, in this very house, do you mean? Do you know the size of it? [...] I have two places beside this, and they are like boxes – big enough for me and my things; but where could I put another? Still, under pressure it could be done' (133-4). As it turns out, the arrangement improves rather than diminishes the domesticity of the 'odd little place'.

⁶⁹ Zimmern, p. 99.

Eleanor's first evening at Barker Street establishes the sense of comfort and security that the flat and her friendship with Frances will provide for her:

Frances Sheldon and her guest sat talking over the fire in the cosy little sitting-room at Barker Street, and it was evident that they had found plenty to talk about. The place was tiny, and the furniture was not substantial, but it had a certain airy prettiness about it, and the basket chairs were comfortable enough lounges after a hard day's work. [...] Their meeting had been a curious experience, but after a cup of tea and a little talk on commonplace subjects, they were beginning to feel at home with each other. (139)

The scene that develops over the cup of tea as the two characters 'begin [...] to feel at home with each other' enlists the two women as members of a household rather than independent residents of ladies' chambers. The description is symbolically loaded: the tea, the comfortable chairs, and the fire all define this space as one that fits into patterns of conventional domesticity. Alice Zimmern notes the centrality of the fire in determining private space when she refers to a new large-scale residential scheme developed for 400 women who earn between £50 and £120 per annum, which will 'bear some resemblance to Sloane Gardens House, but [is to] be larger and cheaper, and therefore necessarily more barrack-like'.⁷⁰ The scale was not the objectionable aspect of this scheme as far as Zimmern was concerned, after all she campaigned for the development of a 'Rowton House for Women'; it was rather that the design would 'abolish that Englishwoman's palladium, the individual hearth' as a labour-saving measure.⁷¹ After suggesting that the error in logic owes something to the proprietor's Canadian nationality, Zimmern explains: 'Can a room without a fireplace be regarded as a home? Abolish the fireplace, and the room is no longer a sanctum. [...] Surely it was Emerson who said that the chief good a man got from going to College was that he had a room and fire of his own. And it means even more to a woman'.⁷² Exactly why such home comforts mean more to women is not made explicit, but Zimmern acknowledges that unlike men women have an 'overmastering tendency [...] to make a home out of the meanest attic lodging' and

⁷⁰ Zimmern, p. 101.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

that 'in dwellings for women the centre of gravity shifts itself naturally from the dining room and other public rooms to the private room. These are the individual centres: if these are right nothing can be very wrong'.⁷³ Such rhetoric therefore constructs the individual fire – at least for middle-class women – as the defining feature of private space. If women were therefore to feel at home in an unconventional or institutional building, the individual hearth and its association with women's domestic work and the centre of the household, was necessary to set things 'right'.

Thus while the symbolic value of features like the hearth cannot be overlooked, the quality that turns the Barker Street hearth into a home is the companionship that develops between Frances and Eleanor in this moment. The two women who find 'plenty to talk about' feel entirely 'at home with each other' (139). On only this first night, the three-bedroom flat is represented as a more comfortable and familiar home to Eleanor than is the farmhouse in Fife. When Eleanor's brother Claud and his wife Mary visit Barker Street the rather guileless Claud cannot help but to articulate the perceived difference between the two houses: 'So this is where Eleanor hangs out [...]. Rather a change from Haugh, eh, Mary?' (174). Mary dismisses his banter by saying, 'It is very nice, I think. [...] I shouldn't mind it myself' (174). Her cutting remark gathers significance as the novel unfolds and the newlyweds' ambition of domestic bliss is undermined by Claud's alcoholism, which ruins Mary's hope of making a family home of their own house, Annfield. Their situation worsens when Claud nearly kills his own father in an alcohol-induced violent rage, and is then threatened with eviction from the family property. Eleanor disregards Claud's raillery and insists that she prefers London's 'free and easy life', and so long as her mother does not send for her, she 'mean[s] to stay' (178). Whereas Eleanor's initial motivation for staying in London originates in her sense of pride – or more specifically the desire to prove herself to her family, which is so often the reason for the independent woman's presence in the city in fiction – Eleanor eventually comes to appreciate the emancipatory possibilities of her new residential arrangements. These possibilities do not only come from living at the Barker Street Chambers, but from the social opportunities it provides.

⁷³ Zimmern, p. 97.

Sharing a small flat at Barker Street does not infringe upon that privacy that was assumed to be so necessary for bourgeois femininity and safeguarding the definition of a middle-class home. Instead, in the novel, this spatial compromise provokes the personal development of both characters and is in this sense central to the way that the narrative progresses.

A Victory Won suggests a somewhat undeveloped, but nevertheless important, connection between a woman's relationship with her mother and her capacity for forming friendships with other women. Having lost her mother at an early age, Frances is surprised to learn of Eleanor's disregard for her own mother and confesses that she 'would give ten, aye twenty years of my life to have a mother – good, bad, or indifferent. [...] The first real desolation of life comes home to a girl, I can tell you, when she is made motherless' (142). It is Frances's loss of her own mother that seems to bestow upon her a desire to establish a support network in the city that she calls her home. Unlike Eleanor's father, Frances's father does not impetuously deny her support, but is not in a position to support her financially and seems unable to support her emotionally. The often uncharitable, and almost always incompetent, behaviour of both women's fathers in this novel is, interestingly enough, shared by Katharine Austen's father in *The Making of a Prig*. Apart from providing the impetus for these women to venture to the city to live independently, the behaviour of these men also serves to question the presumed stability of the conventional family by weakening the role of its paternal figurehead. Eleanor's mother is a mostly sympathetic character, although the narrator makes clear that her unfaltering deference to her husband's unreasonable behaviour and her efforts to whitewash his alcoholism do more harm than good. Eleanor's friendship with Frances does not so much inculcate in her a sense of filial duty as it does launch an appeal for generosity and forgiveness towards her family. Frances Sheldon feels she is given a task, and that is 'to awaken the soul of Eleanor Kerr' (145), and her success in doing so is the 'victory' that is won through the course of the narrative. The method by which Frances achieves this victory is by imparting her own generosity and thereby enabling the development of a domestic or 'private' relationship with

Eleanor. When a family friend travels to London to visit Eleanor (and to report back to Eleanor's mother) she is reassured by the supportive relationship that the women's domestic situation has allowed. Standing outside the door of the flat

Mrs. Allardyce heard a peal of girlish laughter – so genuine, so spontaneous, and so infectious, that it provoked a smile on her own lips, and brought a satisfied look into her eyes. Such laughter does not come with a heavy heart. If times were hard with the two working women within, care sat lightly upon them. (154)

Such representations of women's friendships are not uncommon in literature of the period, and as Sally Mitchell has explored, feature prominently in girls' school stories.⁷⁴ What is interesting about this particular novel is that this friendship is the central relationship of the novel, and it is not defined only by their gleeful girlish naivety but also by their ability to mitigate each other's material and emotional difficulties. Most novels about women's dwellings, as will be discussed further in the following section, represent these spaces and the (often superficial) relationships that develop within them as a temporary stopgap in the interim before marriage. In 'Women Workers', Hobhouse acknowledges that this occurs not only in the genre of romantic fiction that frames its conclusion with a marriage, but that it was a common misconception that informed the ways that women's dwellings were designed and managed.⁷⁵ Yet residences for schoolgirls and dwellings for professional women operated on very different principles, Hobhouse explains, for 'students need only temporary, not permanent accommodation; and many rubs can be endured when they are known to be temporary'.⁷⁶ Although the novel's conclusion implies that neither Eleanor nor Frances will return to their shared flat at Barker Street, it is made clear that their friendship will endure. The significance of this relationship is brought into greater relief when one considers the representation of women's friendship in novels like *The Making of a Prig* or *George Eastmont, Wanderer*. While

74 Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 74-102.

75 Hobhouse, p. 480.

76 Ibid.

Katharine Austen makes the acquaintance of a number of women living in her building, she regards them with suspicion on account of their inclination for gossip and conjecture. The only person with whom Katharine has any extended conversation, Phyllis Hyam, has a 'bluntness that estranged all her friends in time' (158) and is never really a friend to Katharine but a sounding board for her romantic dilemmas. When Katharine, for instance, decides to break off her relationship with an older man, she feels that without his companionship she will be 'left entirely friendless' (163). Katharine's closest friend is in fact her childhood friend from the country, Ted, whose good nature and devotion to her she unconscionably exploits. An unrequited love interest is the only close friend of Mary Cameron, the journalist and political activist who lives in the ladies' chambers in Harkness's *George Eastmont, Wanderer*.

The laughter that Mrs. Allardyce understands to reveal the women's supportive and cheerful friendship is corroborated by her time spent at the flat as a guest. When she arrives, 'Eleanor was toasting muffins before the little gas stove in the scullery'; as a consequence of her newly developed sense of generosity, Eleanor offers Mrs. Allardyce 'the most comfortable basket-chair in the sitting room', while 'Frances took her cloak, and untied her bonnet strings, and got her a footstool' (155). While the mawkish descriptions of the hearth, the 'little gas stove', and the 'comfortable basket-chair' appear in order to align this space with the comforts of a conventional home, the cooperation and companionship Mrs. Allardyce observes also convince her of the flat's domestic suitability. Watching Eleanor prepare tea and Frances act as hostess, Mrs. Allardyce comments in the rather awkward dialect that Margaret Oliphant understandably spurned, 'You two are very comfortable here [...] [a]n' very sib-like for two that never saw other a week syne' (155). In the expression 'sib-like' she implies that the women have established a relationship akin to that of siblings in the short time that they have lived together. It is easy to interpret this scene as an overly-sentimental articulation of the ways that these women, despite their compromised circumstances, adhere to domestic convention. It can also be interpreted in the tradition of schoolgirls' stories in

which young and often rebellious girls are inculcated into traditional gender frameworks in homosocial environments that prepare them for an ineluctable heterosexual union at the narrative's conclusion. However Eleanor and Frances do not only play at hostesses in order to entertain guests or behave in a way that designates their friendship as an ancillary relationship. Frances later reveals that they have been keeping a common purse that enables them to better negotiate expenses. She suggests that if Eleanor is unable to maintain a steady position that they will simply 'go on short commons', and adds: 'It isn't the first time I've only had a meat dinner once a week' (175). When Frances is invited to stay with Mrs. Allardyce in Scotland after the two develop an affinity, Frances explains to Eleanor's surly father who sceptically inquires about his daughter's ability to live independently: 'We share and share alike. When times are hard, we fast together' (212). While the familiar trope of women's compulsion for self-sacrifice is used here, that it is a sacrifice for a life that is both independent and collaborative is significant: simply put, these women establish an egalitarian relationship and as a result its emotional landscape sits outside the conventions of either schoolgirl fiction or the Kailyard.

This cooperative relationship allows each individual to benefit materially from the shared space of the flat and their united financial resources, but it also addresses emotional necessity. The clearest and most predictable character development is that of Eleanor, to whom Frances 'give[s] [...] the benefit of [her] experience' (156). Such experience does not speak only to practical lessons for the independent urban woman, but the development of what is referred to in the text rather vaguely as 'common sense' (213). This phrase, in the context of the novel, connotes generosity and consideration as much as it does sound judgement and self-sufficiency. After spending only a short time with Frances, Eleanor

for the first time in her existence [...] found herself face to face with the reality of life as embodied in the experience of Frances Sheldon. Here was a girl not so much older than herself, and endowed with equal or perhaps deeper capacity for the enjoyment of all the prizes of life, cheerfully toiling to keep herself independent and respectable and denying herself to give a

little enjoyment to those she loved, and to help others in greater need than herself. (144-5)

The passage suggests that the supportive relationship that has developed between the women while living at Barker Street is unique to that environment, Eleanor having experienced this intimacy 'for the first time in her existence' (145). Once again, the emphasis on self-denial and respectability fits into the nineteenth-century paradigm of behaviour appropriate for middle-class women. Yet this interpretation must take into account the intimacy and mutuality of their relationship, which I have suggested is made possible by their common household. While Frances does manage to 'awaken' Eleanor's 'soul' (145), Eleanor equally encourages Frances to value her own experience more highly – and also brings her into contact with Mrs. Allardyce who will become to her a mother figure. The relationship between Frances and Mrs. Allardyce is not one of substitution or surrogacy, but exists alongside Frances's own familial ties. The only instance of the narrator's direct address emphasises the significance of this relationship to the reader: 'These two women had been happier together than it is possible for me to express in words [...] and could have lived a lifetime together without jarring upon each other in the smallest degree' (248). Their relationship is suitably sentimentalised for the Kailyard tradition, but it also makes use of the novel's broader pattern of rearranging the conventional or biological family and articulating the emotionally fulfilling possibilities of elective relationships and households. In line with her earlier characterisation as a bachelor woman, but one who resists parody or predictable representation, Frances does not 'affect a cheap scorn of love and marriage' (247) as did many of her fictional contemporaries. The narrator explains that '[a]s for love, while not denying its existence, [Frances] regarded it from the standpoint of an audience who are pleased to be amused' (205). Notwithstanding Frances's position on marriage, the novel adheres to Kailyard convention in supplying Mrs. Allardyce with an eligible, exemplary and attractive son, Robert, who finds Frances's 'self-reliance [...] rather refreshing' (206). Although the novel concludes with a proposal and the suggestion of a marriage between Robert and Frances, she

initially refuses the proposal and insists that they spend one year apart – her returning to Barker Street – after which point both 'will know [their] own minds' (206). It is tempting to interpret this conclusion as the rehabilitation of the independent woman, as the opportunity for marriage falls to the very character who disassociates herself from the possibility of such a union. Yet Frances is not exactly rehabilitated by one romantic relationship as much as she is enriched by a series of relationships that includes Eleanor, Mrs. Allardyce and her son Robert. The reader is given the sense that Frances has developed beyond the narrator's evaluation that she 'she did not belong to the Emancipated' (247), for before she agrees to marry Robert she asks him directly: 'I've sometimes called myself one of the emancipated. Are you prepared to have an emancipated wife?' (284).

Although *A Victory Won* closely follows the sentimental tradition of the Kailyard in many ways, it also makes number of important remarks about the degree to which new forms of urban housing allowed residents to form intimate and egalitarian relationships that would contribute to the development of what Martha Vicinus describes as networks of independent women that would form important 'new communities'.⁷⁷ *A Victory Won* stops short of representing a broader network of support for independent single women in the city. In fact, there is very little detail about the urban environment and no description of the Barker Street Chambers – its appearance or its management – beyond the flat that Frances and Eleanor share. In this sense the novel is restricted in the ways that it conceptualises these new homes: despite the important and enabling relationships that occur within this space, the flat at Barker Street is described very much like a traditional middle-class home with the exception of its size. Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of a Prig* is concerned with the ways in which daily life in these new residences was different to the traditional home. The reasons for this are no mystery; having herself lived at the Brabazon House Hostel, which was somewhat below the high standards of the Chenies Street Chambers, Sharp was working through her own experience of living in such accommodation. From Sharp's description, and journalistic accounts that suggest that women's residences exaggerated 'the British failing of exclusiveness and

⁷⁷ Vicinus, p. 31.

indifference to others, which is such a marked feature of London life', it seems that Swan's irrepressibly buoyant depiction of life in a shared flat might be rather too rosy.⁷⁸ Perhaps, after all, it was this inaccuracy to which Adeline Sergeant objected in her response to Swan's earlier version of the story.⁷⁹ Yet Swan reworks the sentimental schoolgirl novel and places women's adult friendships at the centre of this narrative, and it is no surprise that ladies' chambers created an environment in which this relationship could thrive. While Swan's novel might seem hopelessly utopian in its representation of women's dwellings when set alongside much contemporaneous journalism, or the work of authors like Sharp and Sergeant who had actually lived in these buildings, her inexperience in this case allows her to focus on what these new domestic situations enabled, rather than what they compromised.

Flat Ambition:
Satire and Social Climbing in Julia Frankau's *The Heart of a Child* (1908)

Although her earliest novels were most famous for their scandalous impropriety, Julia Frankau's work after the turn of the century was appreciated by critics and widely read. The novel *Pigs in Clover* (1903), her first after a twelve-year hiatus during which she contributed weekly to the *Saturday Review* and published a number of historical and art historical texts, re-established her literary reputation as an author who had learned to treat subjects more even-handedly. Sarah Gracombe suggests, in fact, that in ways this novel redresses the prejudice presented in *Dr. Phillips* (1887) in its 'far more complex, sympathetic look at Jewishness'.⁸⁰ Social and political questions are generally treated in a more nuanced way in Frankau's later work, and issues such as war, colonialism and the position of women remain strong themes in her novels. The popular success of *The Heart of a Child* (1908) – there were at least two film versions of the story made, one an early

⁷⁸ 'Where the Unmarried Live', p. 131.

⁷⁹ Crawford, p. 214.

⁸⁰ Sarah Gracombe, 'Imperial Englishness in the "Book of the Jew"', *Prooftexts*, 30 (2010), 147-179 (p. 155).

Hollywood film – owes something to its basis on the Cinderella story popularised in the nineteenth century by the Brothers Grimm.⁸¹ In places, the novel's sentimentality is barely kept in check by the periodic spasms of irony that characterise Frankau's later fiction. The narrative traces the 'meteoric' (6) career of a woman who begins life as Sally Snape and who, at the novel's conclusion, is Lady Kidderminster.⁸² One reviewer describes the familiar story, which is also the plot of Elinor Glyn's *The Career of Katharine Bush* (1916) and W.B. Maxwell's *Vivien* (1905), as one of the 'female climber to fame' by way of the route of 'social success'.⁸³ Yet to focus on the novel's representation of housing contradicts the heroine's ascent, for in her social climbing she experiences various restrictions that emerge from women's association with domesticity across all classes. While Sally's access to housing improves and she is materially better off at the novel's conclusion, throughout the narrative she is limited and often imperilled by the social implications of the unconventional dwellings she inhabits.

Although Frankau relinquishes the sustained satire of her earlier novels, in *The Heart of a Child* she borrows from popular literary discourse in order to rework conventions and undermine the reader's expectations just as she does in *A Babe in Bohemia*.⁸⁴ *The Heart of a Child* borrows from different literary conventions for each stage of the heroine's life, beginning with slum fiction in a scene that is a pastiche of Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896). Born in the 'incredibly rotten and insanitary' slum of Angelhouse Gardens in Limehouse, Sally Snape is discovered by Ursula Rugeley: a Charity Organisation Society district visitor who feels compelled to support

81 *The Complete Index to Literary Sources in Film* lists two film productions of novel: 1916 (UK; dir. Harold Shaw) and 1920 (USA; dir. Ray C. Smallwood). See Alan Goble, *The Complete Index to Literary Sources in Film* (London: Bauker-Saur, 1999), p. 792. The British Film Institute database lists both productions (although the former is dated as 1915), but has no further information about versions of the film made in 1911 (France), 1913 (USA), 1914 and 1925. See 'The Heart of a Child', *British Film Institute Database* <<http://explore.bfi.org.uk>> [accessed 20 January 2014].

82 Frank Danby [Julia Frankau], *The Heart of a Child* (London: Macmillan, 1908), p. 6. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

83 Frederick Thomas Dalton, 'New Novels', *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 April 1917, p. 176.

84 For a consideration of Frankau's satire of slum fiction in *A Babe in Bohemia* (1889), see Chapter 2.2 of the present work. Tabitha Sparks has suggested that in *Dr. Phillips* Frankau makes similar parodic use of the conventions of sensation fiction. Tabitha Sparks, 'The Symbolic Economy of Disease in Sensation and Satire: *Lady Audley's Secret* and *Dr. Phillips: A Maida Vale Idyl*', Paper given at the Birkbeck Forum for Nineteenth-Century Studies, 11 November 2013.

Sally on account of her moral integrity. However the narrator explains that in her work the district visitor 'was learning more than she was teaching, [and] receiving more than she was giving' (3). In fact the narrator's initial description of the 'foul gutters [...] tottering, low tenement houses, the front bulging, the broken windows filled in with rags of paper, the roofs rotting' is soon contradicted:

Yet here, on that May day, ten years ago, the organ grinder turned his tune, and, with shoeless feet, or feet worse than shoeless, in men's boots, carpet slippers, gaping, ragged gear of every description, the draggle-tailed children danced. And they danced well, now a reel, now a polka, now a valse; not the latest fashionable variety perhaps, but always in strict time, with never a step missed, and a sense of gaiety and abandonment amazing to the district visitor. (1)

The opening sequence establishes a pattern that recurs throughout the novel, one which resituates the moral implications of generic conventions (here these are the generic conventions of slum fiction). Children who in *A Child of the Jago* are represented as ineluctably immoral and devoted to 'coshing' are here engaged in a comparatively wholesome activity from which they draw pleasure, and their precision and determination in their practice implies a certain virtuousness. Whereas in the Jago 'children were born and reared in circumstances which gave them no reasonable chance of living decent lives', here the narrative resists the environmental determinism that had been especially popular with authors in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ There is another and more explicit clue that Frankau has specifically Morrison's text in mind: a number of years later, when the condemned Angelhouse Gardens is finally demolished by 'the men from the London County Council' (26), the district visitor reappears to offer to assistance to the evicted; the narrator suggests that 'the Reverend Mr. Jay, who had his hands very full indeed, was glad to [accept her help]' (28). The name would have been familiar to readers of Morrison's text, which was dedicated to the Reverend Arthur Osborne Jay, who served as inspiration for the Jago's vicar Father Sturt and who in the novel is served with the impossible task of rehabilitating the district.⁸⁶ Father Sturt

⁸⁵ Arthur Morrison, 'Preface to the Third Edition', *A Child of the Jago* (London: Methuen, 1897), p. x.

⁸⁶ Ibid., dedication page.

recognises the story's protagonist, Dicky Perrott, as a child with potential and arranges for his employment at a local grocer. However the young boy is 'fore-damned to a criminal or semi-criminal career' and the narrative follows his demise and eventual death.⁸⁷ In ways *The Heart of a Child* inverts this narrative, although not merely for corrective purposes; the novel reveals that an individual's material environment does not necessarily determine their moral stature nor correspond to their social status in any straightforward way. Like the Reverend Jay, the district visitor in *The Heart of a Child* commits herself to ameliorating Sally's general condition after the destruction of Angelhouse Gardens. While Ursula Rugeley is a sympathetic character, she also serves to call into question the motivations and effectiveness of philanthropy. Ursula Rugeley is, in fact, a character who would more conventionally be in the role of the protagonist in such a narrative, and who resembles the 'bachelor girl' figure of *The Making of a Prig* and *A Victory Won*:

Ursula Rugeley, who had rejected love and marriage, and turned her back on her relations, fighting through her adult years for some strange phantom of lately secured independence, failed, of course, to realize that here was her more robust prototype. [...] [Ursula] meant well, she had as good a heart as is compatible with a limited intelligence. But she could hardly be made to understand that her presence was regarded as an intrusion, and that Johnny's tact and Sally's indifference covered the same resentment. (18)

This characterisation appears not only for the purpose of dramatic irony, but is also used to establish a thread of shared experience between the two women; it also indicates their social difference. Whereas Ursula's rejection of love and marriage signifies a choice of independence, Sally's declaration, 'as for marryin', I 'ate the very name of it', is ambiguous on account of her social status. The only explanation that the narrator wryly volunteers at this stage is that 'Sally was never easy to understand' (30). Sally's rejection of romantic love cannot be so easily aligned with the motivations a reader would presume of a middle-class woman, and instead it is hinted at that she is romantically naïve and, although 'quite definitely, and not ignorantly, virtuous' (29), sexually immature. The parallel drawn between the two women, Sally and Ursula, causes the reader to

⁸⁷ Morrison, p. x.

modify simple characterisations of either figure in view of this more ambiguous description. For it is revealed soon after that Ursula 'no more understood the sex question, as it appeared to the decent denizens of Limehouse, than Sally understood, later on, how the problem presented itself in Mayfair' (29). One of the novel's reviewers was perplexed by Sally's virtuousness, pointing out that it was unusual her 'physical and moral fastidiousness' should endure throughout the novel, and that inconceivably 'she remains throughout her progress from gutter to factory, factory to hat-shop, hat-shop to stage, and stage to peerage the same person; there is no distortion of character, no sudden and incredible access of exterior refinement'.⁸⁸ The protagonist's immutability is another way in which the novel reworks a narrative the *Saturday Review* derided as 'melodramatically commonplace', and is also an aspect that precludes its classification as a *bildungsroman*, for there is very little psychological development.⁸⁹ The plot's principal variable is not the protagonist but her environment, both her workplace and her residence. Sally's 'meteoric' (6) career is compromised by the constancy of social prejudice.

Several years after Sally's eviction from Angelhouse Gardens, the district visitor encourages her to apply for work in a factory, which will allow her to move from a flat in the new Peabody Buildings that she shares with two male friends: a household arrangement the district visitor finds morally compromising. It is her eventual employment at Messers. Hall & Palmer, that 'celebrated jam and pickle warehouse' (30) on Shaftesbury Avenue, that allows her to move from the East End to Soho. Although it is not explicitly named, Maude Stanley's 'Soho Club and Home for Working Girls' (hereafter Soho Club) on Greek Street was a well-known residence and social club, which according to *The Quiver*, began a 'movement' of residential clubs which 'brighten the lives of working girls in the principal cities of England and America'.⁹⁰ The Honourable Maude Althea Stanley was herself something of a philanthropic celebrity; having begun her career as a poor-law

⁸⁸ Harold Harrington Child, 'Fiction', *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 March 1908, p. 78.

⁸⁹ 'Frank Danby's New Novel', *The Saturday Review*, 4 April 1908, p. 442.

⁹⁰ Frederick Dolman, 'Women Workers for Women', *The Quiver*, 30 January 1895, p. 356.

guardian in the Parish of St. Ann's, Soho, she later became a home visitor in the Five Dials.⁹¹ In *Work About the Five Dials* (1878), Stanley writes about her experience establishing a night school, refuge and social club in the area. Stanley also established a Sunday School, but her approach was known to be 'broad minded' and she recognised that proselytising would alienate the very people she intended to rally.⁹² The Soho Club was similar in outlook, built as it was on 'the foundation of religion' but with the recognition that the establishment would not 'be [successful] by putting religion forward first, by severity, by exclusion of amusements, called by some worldly pleasures'.⁹³ There were some for whom, though, the liberalities of the Soho Club were still too great. One journalist, writing for *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine* under the alias 'A Methodist Country Parson', is predictably opposed to the 'sanction of dancing for working girls' on account of the 'lamentable evils resulting from public and promiscuous dancing'; he suggests that Girls' Clubs should instead be 'an *auxiliary of the Sunday School*'.⁹⁴ Stanley herself expressed some hesitancy around matters of amusement, and she shared the Country Parson's concern that this new group of wage-earners would spend their money unwisely and in doing so develop debts, or worse, dishonest practices of acquiring money. It is partly for this reason that the Soho Club was intensely regulated – and much more so than even the most strait-laced of middle-class women's residences. Before her admission to the club, the potential resident was required to 'obtain from the Matron the rules and a paper to be filled up with references' and '[t]he Card of Membership [was] not given until a visit has been paid to the Candidate's home by one of the Council'.⁹⁵ The club's rules and management make clear that the purpose of the club was not only to provide accommodation, but in Stanley's words, to 'improve the lives of our working classes'.⁹⁶ She explains that club work 'raises and ennobles [...]

91 Stanley was also Manager for the Metropolitan Asylums Board from 1884 and governor of the Borough Polytechnic from 1892. Valerie Bonham, 'Stanley, Maude Alethea (1833-1915)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press Online Edition, 2004) <doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/45676> [accessed 4 December 2013]

92 Bonham, n.p.

93 Maude Stanley, *Clubs for Working Girls* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1890), p. 145.

94 A Methodist Country Parson, 'Clubs for Working Girls', *The Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, July 1890, pp. 500-507 (p. 500; p. 506). Italics in original text.

95 Stanley, pp. 272-273.

96 Ibid., p. 4.

by its wholesome pleasures, its varied interests, by its human sympathies between the ladies and the girls'.⁹⁷ Alongside the classes and activities offered by the club – some of which included gymnastics, mathematics, needlework, music, and French – the club offered a programme of moral training, one which was especially effective for those who were also residents. An attendance register was 'ruled for every day' for all those who lived at the club, and a log book was kept of anyone who visited the club for a meal or the very popular glee club.⁹⁸ Seth Koven suggests that Stanley 'took a dim view of most women's motives for helping the poor', having recognised that charity was often as much a gift to the benefactor as the recipient.⁹⁹ This, however, did not preclude the club's paternalistic philanthropic model, which ensured – along with the rent and club fees – that residents were coached in 'culture and refinement' *de haute en bas*.¹⁰⁰ Stanley explains: 'We have not wished to take our girls out of their class, but we have wished to see them ennoble the class to which they belong'.¹⁰¹

This is the very rule that *The Heart of a Child* breaks. Sally Snape's residency at Greek Street is interrupted by the first of several providential promotions that raise her from the working class to the peerage. Sally does not stay long enough at Greek Street to receive the white snowdrop brooch given to residents after one year of membership, another of Stanley's incentives for physical and social stability.¹⁰² Sally attends the 'Continuation School for a year' (32) and has a 'sixpenny dinner [...] at the Girls' Club' (30), but there is scant mention in the text of the club's strict rules of propriety or its principles of management. In fact, like the Peabody Buildings the Soho Club is largely left to the reader's imagination in this novel. This is unusual given the level of detail that Frankau often devotes to the built environment in her fiction. The practical reason for the limited information about these buildings in the novel is likely that they were unfamiliar to the author – and

97 Ibid., pp. 3-4. On the use of 'girls' rather than 'women', see p. 100, n15 of the present work.

98 Ibid., p. 36; p. 56.

99 Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 198.

100 Stanley, p. 48.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., p. 276. After five years, residents were given a pendant with a snowball, and after ten, another snowball.

unfamiliar to literature more generally. Although Frankau would have been scarcely more knowledgeable about the Limehouse slums than she was of working girls' clubs, there existed by the turn of the twentieth century a large body of slum fiction from which Frankau draws and reworks in her representation of Angelhouse Gardens. The rendering of the Soho Club in *The Heart of the Child* is certainly one of the earliest depictions of a girls' club in popular fiction, and for the sake of including it in the text it is probable that Frankau made use of contemporary journalism and advertisements.¹⁰³ Together with Maude Stanley's regular appearance in the pages of women's magazines – as Koven notes she was the 'doyenne of aristocratic slum philanthropy' – the club was often featured in periodicals that reported on its 'success' and gave basic information about provisions and activities.¹⁰⁴ Middle-class readers were not appealed to as potential residents, but rather encouraged to visit and 'subscribe something towards clearing off the debt which has been incurred by the promoters in their anxiety to benefit the working girls'.¹⁰⁵ An advertisement included in *The Story of Old Soho* (1893), a promotional pamphlet for a fundraising bazaar in Soho Square, seems a likely source from which Frankau may have gleaned information about the Soho Club. The half-page advertisement titled 'Soho Home & Club for Working Girls' (Figure 11) offers details of payments, classes, and facilities such as the library. It also enumerates the cost of 'a bedroom, with sitting room and Gas, Fire, washing of Bed Linen and Towels, 3s. And 4s. a week, paid in advance' although there were also available '[s]ome Rooms at 5s., 6s. And 7s. 6d. each'.¹⁰⁶ The advertisement also states that breakfast, tea and supper were available at 2½d and dinner at a cost of 6d.¹⁰⁷ In *The Heart of a Child*, Sally shares 'a furnished room, at six shillings a week, in Greek Street' (30) with another young woman employed by Messers. Hall & Palmer's jam and pickle warehouse, that

103 There are also representations of such clubs in Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: an Impossible Story* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1882) and in L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (London: Wells Gardner, 1895), which is discussed in a subsequent section. However, Frankau's representation seems to be most closely based on a historical model. Although Sally resides at the club for only a short time, the reader is given more specific information about its operation and administration than is offered in Besant's or Meade's novels.

104 Koven, p. 198; 'Short Arrows', *The Quiver*, January 1884, p. 510.

105 'Short Arrows', p. 510.

106 'Soho Home & Club for Working Girls', *The Story of Old Soho* (London: C. Pettitt & Co., 1893), p. 26.

107 Ibid.

'liberal and intelligent firm' (30). The advertisement confirms that while single rooms were available for those who had the means, 'some [girls] are two or three in a room'.¹⁰⁸ Sally is pleased with the convenience of 'a sixpenny dinner [that] was to be had at the Girls' Club, and tea for twopence' (30). An appendix included in *Clubs for Working Girls* reveals that a number of Soho Club residents were employed at the nearby Crosse & Blackwell's jam factory, which is clearly the model for the Hall & Palmer warehouse in the novel.¹⁰⁹

While it is difficult to discern the precise source from which Frankau drew her information about the Soho Club, it is evident that she did have knowledge of its basic operation. This knowledge was likely drawn from print materials such as the advertisement quoted above. Although Frankau's unfamiliarity with this new form of housing can be cited as one reason for its restricted appearance in the novel, its textual marginality reveals important information about the relationship between working-class women's dwellings and conventional domesticity. The Soho Club was a new model of accommodation when it was built, and one that was – like the middle-class women's residences discussed earlier in this chapter – made necessary partly as a result of changes to the labour market. The descriptions of middle-class ladies' chambers fit more comfortably with the conventions of the nineteenth-century novel, associated as it was with bourgeois domesticity, and as a result it makes a certain amount of sense that residences for working-class women are not represented to the same degree nor in the same ways.¹¹⁰ During the period that Sally lives at Greek Street the majority of her time is spent not at home, but at work – even though '[o]nly ten hours a day was expected of her, and time from that was allowed for dinner in the middle of the day, and tea in the afternoon' (30), as opposed to the fourteen or fifteen she would have spent in her previous occupation making trousers. Of all the forms of housing represented in the novel, and indeed every conceivable option is cycled through, the Soho Club is the best suited to Sally's lifestyle. While

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ 'Soho Home & Club for Working Girls', p. 275.

¹¹⁰ On the novel as a middle-class literary form, see Terry Eagleton, *The English Novel: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2015), pp. 1-8.

living at Greek Street, she benefits from 'having practically a common purse' with Mary and the building's 'community of goods and interests' (31). Where her employment is concerned, Sally had 'not been used to such luxury' (30) as lunch breaks and ten-hour days. Angelhouse Gardens had been condemned and destroyed by the London County Council, and the district visitor had discouraged her habitation in the Peabody Buildings with two men who were not family members, but Sally's accommodation on Greek Street is met with social approval on account of the clear moral project associated with girls' clubs. Like most middle-class women's housing, residential girls' clubs were understood ideologically to be temporary accommodation, even if this was not the case in practice. Where women's new communities and opportunities for housing were concerned, Lynn Walker explains that 'ideologically, the stakes were high; social stability, the good order of society, and even human happiness were perceived to be dependent on women's presence in the [conventional] home'.¹¹¹

Like middle-class women's housing, residential clubs for working-class women socially redefined the traditional home through architectural reordering. However working-class women's dwellings like the Soho Club expressed this reordering differently to accommodation for middle-class women, such as that of the Chenies Street Chambers. Completed in 1884, the Soho Club (Figure 10) is more reserved than its middle-class counterparts in its use of architectural ornamentation. Built in local yellow brick, rather than the standard red brick more often used for residential buildings, the Soho Club is organised into four storeys of nine bays accented by red-brick banding. At ground level there is a series of pilasters, and the entrances are marked out by pediments. The stripped-down neo-classical style, fitting for the building's situation on Greek Street, also limits decorative features in view of finance. Unlike the Queen Anne style preferred by architects of middle-class dwellings, here the structure's residential purpose is only revealed at the roof-line by a series of six dormers. In some ways the design of the Soho Club resembles model dwellings like the Peabody Buildings more closely than it does the buildings of the Ladies'

¹¹¹ Walker, 'Home and Away', p. 298.



Figure 10: Front Facade, Soho Club & Home for Working Girls (built 1884; photograph 2014).

Source: Author

An advertisement for the Soho Club & Home for Working Girls. The advertisement is framed by a decorative border. On the left, there is a detailed illustration of the building, showing its three-story structure with multiple windows and a central entrance. Above the illustration, the text reads: "Soho Club & Home for Working Girls, 59, Greek Street, Soho Square, London, W." Below the illustration, it says: "Any one desiring Lodgings must obtain from the Matron the rules and a paper to be filled up with references, and can at any time see the rooms." To the right of the illustration, there is a section titled "THE CLUB" which lists various facilities and rules. Below this, there is a section titled "THE HOME" which describes the lodging arrangements. The text is arranged in a clear, readable format, with headings and sub-headings used to organize the information.

Soho Club & Home for Working Girls,
59, Greek Street, Soho Square, London, W.

THE CLUB
Is open every week day from 7 till 10 p.m., and on Sundays.
PAYMENTS.—Entrance Fee—One Shilling. Subscription—Two Shillings per quarter, paid in advance.
A SAVINGS BANK for the Club Members is open from 8 to 10 p.m. every Monday and Friday.
CLASSES.
MONDAY—Evening School—Drawing.
TUESDAY—French and Singing.
Plain Needlework and Cutting out.
WEDNESDAY—Musical Evening.
Gymnastics and Musical Drill.
THURSDAY—Evening School—Arithmetic.
FRIDAY—Art Needlework and Dancing.
LIBRARY.—Mondays and Wednesdays.
REFRESHMENTS.—A Coffee Bar open every evening, managed by the Committee. Any member of the Club may have dinner or tea at the Club on applying to the Matron.

THE HOME.
Lodgings for Young Women engaged in business, and students. Rent of Bedroom, including use of Sitting Room, is with Gas, Fire, washing of Bed-linen and Towels, 3s. and 4s. a week, paid in advance.
Some Rooms at 5s., 6s. and 7s. 6d. each.
There are 33 beds in the Home; some are in cubicles, some in single rooms, and some are two or three in a room.
Teachers or Students coming to London to pass Examinations can be Lodged at 1s. per night.
Breakfast, Tea and Supper, 2½d. each.
Dinner 6d.
Ladies' Maids and Nurses 11s. 6d. a week for Board and Lodging.

Figure 11: 'Soho Club & Home for Working Girls', Advertisement from *The Story of Old Soho* (1893), p. 26.

Source: 'Soho Club & Home for Working Girls', *The Story of Old Soho* (London: C. Pettitt & Co., 1893), n.p.

Residential Chambers Company. This is evident in its use of brick work for decorative patterning, the facade accented by fenestration, and its use of a pediment (or an entablature, in the case of the Peabody Buildings) to mark out an entrance. The Soho Club's design indicates the social group for which it was intended, but it also underscores the ways that the building was at variance with conventional domesticity. The building's size, although there was accommodation for only 33 women (fewer than the Chenies Street Chambers), emphasised by the symmetry and simplicity, contrasts with both the single-family dwelling and the more picturesque character of middle-class women's residences (afforded to them by their Queen Anne design). The advertisement in *The Story of Old Soho* (Figure 11) exaggerates the building's decorative aspect, and strangely offers a perspective that would have been impossible from street level. The illustration of the Soho Club, which includes a steeply-pitched roof punctuated by dormers, uses such features to highlight the building's residential purpose. From street level, constrained on a shallow plot between two other buildings and overlooking a narrow street, this aspect would have been (and today still is) entirely obscured. If the Peabody Buildings were said to resemble 'terrible barracks', as George Gissing proclaimed in *The Nether World* (1880), the Soho Club looked not unlike the paired-down factories where its residents spent the most of their time.¹¹²

Despite Sally's satisfaction with her arrangements at Greek Street, within the context of a narrative of social mobility, her status as a single working-class woman renders her progress incomplete. The reader is reminded of these social expectations by the relentless conjugal ambitions of Sally's appropriately-named friend and flatmate, Mary. Although Sally 'was conscious that she would a thousand times rather go to learn the millinery in Brook Street than marry anybody' (70), Mary is preoccupied by her fantasies of '[a] semi-detached villa in Dalston, with white curtains to the windows, and red geraniums in boxes; perhaps a slip of a garden, [her 'young man'] Alfred for whom to cook and his clothes to mend, Alfred to call her "little wifey," and come home to her each evening — a home, and she the centre of it' (70). Despite such zeal, Mary and her husband Alfred

112 George Gissing, *The Nether World* (Brighton: Harvester, 1974), p. 274.

are compelled to live with his mother after their wedding on account of their limited resources. Sally's transformation from this state of independence into the heroine of a romance plot requires a self-consciously absurd narrative intervention that involves a fairy godmother figure: Sally is nearly killed in an automobile accident after being hit by 'Lady Dorothea Lytham, driving her new 40-horse-power Panhard with her habitual courageous incapacity' (42). Lady Dorothea, who is kind enough to visit Sally in the hospital, discovers that the young girl works in a factory. Lady Dorothea, who imagines '[factory work] must be great fun' (51), explains to Sally that her 'extraordinary hair' is really better suited for a West End hat shop. Lady Dorothea's 'freak of the imagination' (52), inspired by this freak accident, sets in motion the next phase of Sally's career: after her success in a dress shop on Brook Street and a bizarre change of name to 'Sarita Mainwaring', she treads the boards of music halls and theatres where she attracts the attention of Lord Kidderminster. While working in the theatre, Sally resides with her friend and colleague Elfrida in a lodging house on 'Gooch Place' (195), based on Goodge Street, which lies just west of Bloomsbury off Tottenham Court Road. The distinction between the lodging house and boarding house, as Terri Mullholland explains, was not only that boarding included the provision of food.¹¹³ As Leonore Davidoff notes, in the nineteenth century domestic privacy became increasingly valued and was considered especially necessary for middle-class women to maintain their respectability.¹¹⁴ More recently, Lynne Walker, drawing on the work of AnnMarie Adams, suggests that 'the Victorian home itself was associated with the female body and its enclosed interior'.¹¹⁵ For women, boarding was more acceptable as the resident was at least nominally integrated into the household by way of the table or 'board'; the lower-end of lodging houses were associated with 'dirt, disease and immorality' and catered for an itinerant population.¹¹⁶ 'Respectability', Mullholland explains,

113 Terri Anne Mullholland, 'The Literature of the Boarding House: Female Transient Space in the 1930s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queens College, University of Oxford, 2012), p. 37.

114 Leonore Davidoff, 'The Separation of Home and Work? Landladies and Lodgers in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century England', in *Fit Work for Women*, ed. by Sandra Burman (London: Croom Helm), pp. 64-97 (p. 69).

115 Lynne Walker, 'Home Making: An Architectural Perspective', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 27.3 (2002), 823-835 (p. 826).

116 Mullholland, p. 31.

'was mapped onto the geographical location of the boarding house' and Bloomsbury retained at least the 'vestigial aura of respectability'.¹¹⁷ The lodging house where Sally lives on Gooch Place, 'that grey, sordid street' with the 'dirty doorstep, the narrow entry, the close lodging-house air that filled it' (195), is therefore just outside the borders of respectability. When Sally is set to become the next Letty Lind her manager decides that she needs 'a nice clean little flat' (212), and suggests she relocate to the Tillery Mansions in Victoria. The district visitor, who arranged for Sally's move from the Peabody Buildings owing to her own 'spasms and qualms of conscience' (29), is uncertain about the respectability of flat-living and asks Sally if her manager 'think[s] she will be better in a flat than in a nice boarding-house?' (212). Ursula's belief that Sally lives in a boarding-house, and not a lodging-house, is yet another of the district visitor's characteristic misreadings of the domestic sphere; the boarding-house, however grim, follows the aesthetic conventions of traditional domesticity. The important and symbolic word is here is house – which in the mind of the district visitor will always be preferable to the model dwellings or block of flats that aesthetically vaunts its difference.

The Tillery Mansions take as their model the Artillery Mansions (Figure 12), one of London's earliest blocks of flats designed by the architect John Calder and completed in 1895.¹¹⁸ Stephen Inwood notes that the 'English distaste for flats and apartments was breaking down in the later nineteenth century' and that Victoria Street was the 'pioneer of middle-class apartment blocks (or 'mansion flats'), with flats of three or four bedrooms and servants' quarters'.¹¹⁹ By the last decade of the nineteenth century, when the Artillery Mansions were completed, Victoria Street was panelled from one end to the other with apartment blocks five to six storeys in height like the Grosvenor Mansions, the Albert Mansions, Windsor House and Westminster Chambers which, as Richard Dennis notes, appeared 'Babylonian in scale but also "Babel-like" in gathering hundreds of

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 34; Qtd. in Mullholland, p. 35.

¹¹⁸ Ben Weinreb et al., 'Victoria Station', *The London Encyclopedia*, 3rd edn (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 975.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Inwood, *City of Cities: The Birth of Modern London* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 208.



Figure 12: Entrance Arch, Artillery Mansions, Westminster (1895), Postcard (1907).

Source: Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity: Representations and Productions of Metropolitan Space, 1840-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 247.

people of different ages, experience, and origins together under one roof'.¹²⁰ First intended as a residence for the staff of the nearby Army and Navy store, Artillery Mansions uses standard residential red brick embellished by a highly decorative neo-gothic facade. The central bay is marked out by an exaggerated gothic entrance arch, the broad span of which provides a perspective of the inner quadrangle and decorative fountain. The symmetrical fenestration organises the facade into seven separate vertical bays, each of which is crowned by an arch which extends into a gable that breaks the building's cornice. The building's vertical accent is heightened by the use of pilasters that frame each window, and which are crowned by a lintel with a pattern of basic tracery. The grand scale of the building, combined with its organisation around a central quadrangle as well as its use of ornament, suggests the collegiate gothic as a model; no doubt a choice intended to play into the building's aspirations of 'old-fashioned elegance'.¹²¹ By this point the use of neo-gothic ornamentation – the establishment style from the point of its use in the reconstructed Palace of Westminster in 1840 – for any building, even of this scale, was not unusual. The civic improvement scheme initiated by Angela Burdett-Coutts in 1869 to build dwellings and a covered market at Columbia Road used (a considerably more abstemious) Neo-Gothic style for a large-scale domestic design.¹²² Nor is it anomalous in its use of a traditional style for a building that sought to be recognised as modern and efficient; when George Gilbert Scott's St. Pancras Station opened in 1868 it was viewed in structure, style and purpose as a thoroughly modern building. However the Artillery Mansions aimed to communicate elegance, efficiency and what Richard Dennis describes as 'stylish mobility'; as a result, the Artillery Mansions offered accommodation to a new social group, one that ran against the grain of conventional domesticity.¹²³ In this sense, the building's architectural reception cannot be separated from its social purpose.

Advertisements, signboards and postcards for the Artillery Mansions all call attention to the

120 Richard Dennis, 'Babylonian Flats in Victorian and Edwardian London', *The London Journal*, 33.3 (2008), 233-247 (p. 233).

121 Dennis, *Cities in Modernity*, p. 247.

122 John Nelson Tarn, *Working-Class Housing in 19th-Century Britain* (London: Lund Humphries, 1971), pp. 15-16.

123 Dennis, *Cities in Modernity*, p. 247.

convenience of apartment living: it was 'the most central position in town', it was 'close to St James Park and the District Railway, Parliament, the Abbey, Victoria Railway Station, Army & Navy Store, and the New Catholic Church [Westminster Cathedral]' and there was even a 'French Chef'.¹²⁴ These advertisements emphasise features that would chime with potential residents' notions of middle-class domesticity, like an 'interior decorated with palms and flowers', but at the same time acknowledge improvements and embellishments to single-family dwellings: 'one of the most handsome entrances in London; large quadrangle laid out with tessellated paving, with novel illuminated Parisian fountain'.¹²⁵ There were electric lights and telephones, as well as 'accommodation for cycles', and the availability of 'pure water from an artesian well on the premises'.¹²⁶ Together with its unusually flamboyant ornamentation in design, these modern conveniences were necessary to differentiate the mansion block from the model dwelling – but such features lead some critics to associate apartment buildings and their residents with a level of extravagance that was morally suspicious. In *The Heart of A Child*, the narrator is required to defend Sally's pleasure in her new home:

Sally was innately honest as she was innately pure. *But* she loved soft linings and pretty frocks. She loved, too, her new flat, a furnished bedroom, sitting-room, and bathroom, in Tillery Mansions, Victoria. She was not dull or solitary in it, there was no time. There were music lessons, and dancing lessons, she had massage to make her limbs supple, she had her rehearsals [...] [emphasis added]. (215)

The narrator's vindication of Sally's delight in her new home, an emotion which is to be expected given that she was apparently born in the city's worst slum, is in part a defence of her new career as an actress. The actress, a familiar figure in the narrative of social progress, was successful on account of her capacity for dissimulation both personally and professionally. Deborah Parsons notes that one of the period's best known fictional actresses, the protagonist of Theodore Dreiser's

124 'Furnished London Residence, Artillery Mansions', *The Times of India*, 14 May 1903, p. 7.

125 'High Class Residential Mansions', *The Times*, 2 September 1897, p. 12.

126 Ibid.

Sister Carrie (1900), succeeds on account of having 'learn[ed] to negotiate her place in the urban world and harmonize herself within her environment', and experiences such as these lead to the forging of what Parsons refers to as a new gendered city consciousness.¹²⁷ While most commonly the actress' flexible identity and urban sensibility were a threat to social stability (Dreiser's novel concludes with Carrie sitting alone in the penthouse suite of a glamorous New York hotel, having left a trail of financially and emotionally ruined men behind her) in *The Heart of a Child* the narrator insists that idleness and indulgence are impossibilities not in spite of but *because* of her professional life, for 'there was no time' (215). Apartment blocks like the Tillery Mansions were 'disruptive of middle-class social and architectural values', whereas residences like the Soho Club were understood as part of a philanthropic project designed to correct working-class itinerancy and protect the virtue of young women.¹²⁸ Therefore Sally's move from the Soho Club (by way of a brief stint at Ursula Ruguley's Bayswater Villa and the Gooch Street lodging house) to the Tillery Mansions places her in a less conventional position despite the improvement to her material circumstances. This change of address requires the narrator to regularly aver Sally's moral goodness.

The middle-class mansion flat, a form of housing still in its infancy at the historical moment of this novel, was morally suspect for a number of reasons – and particularly so for women. The flat was a form of housing especially popular with, and most often designed for, 'well-off bachelors who preferred central to suburban living but who could not afford a flat in the West End'.¹²⁹ Most mansion flats were consequently mass congregations of young, unattached metropolitan men and therefore a woman who selected a flat as her residence breeched the conventions of both society and gender. Being within the audible range of the division bell, the Artillery Mansions were especially popular as a *pied-à-terre* for members of parliament, which corroborated its reputation

127 Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 55; p. 29.

128 Dennis, 'Babylonian Flats', p. 245.

129 Inwood, p. 218.

as a male space and one that was antithetical to a settled home.¹³⁰ George Bernard Shaw satirises both concerns in the opening scene of *The Philanderer* (1893), which is set in another of London's early apartment blocks, Ashley Gardens (1890). The unconventionality of the play's profligate bohemian protagonist Leonard Charteris, sufficiently expressed by his wardrobe which includes a turquoise ring, blue socks and leather sandals, is further declared by the setting: a flat, furnished with 'theatrical engravings and photographs and a bust of Shakespeare', that belongs not to Charteris but to the thirty-two-year-old Grace Tranfield.¹³¹ The Artillery Mansions negotiated the notoriously disreputable character of mansion flats that is mocked in Shaw's play by offering, in addition to 'Rooms for Married Couples from £75' and 'Bachelor Rooms from £42', 'Rooms for Ladies – Floors set apart for ladies only. with [sic] separate housekeepers: single from £25, unfurnished: or furnished if desired'.¹³²

Although the flat that Sally rents at the Tillery Mansions would have been located on a Ladies' Floor, her residence in this building still renders her morally dubious. Sally's manager arranges for the payment of her rent directly from her own salary, but when Lord Kidderminster begins courting Sally her career of 'honest work' (258) is doubted by Kidderminster's friends who are sceptical about the possibility of 'platonic friendships with theatre girls' (259). Society gossip soon casts aspersions upon the actress who is believed to have been given 'a brougham and a motor to take her backward and forward' by Lord Kidderminster, which he denies as 'a damned lie' and explains much like narrator that '[s]he's a decent, straight, hard-working little girl' (258). Sharon Marcus has explored the way in which dwellings with common living areas used by individuals who were not family relations were often viewed as promiscuous spaces.¹³³ Although common

130 Christopher Warman, 'Marilyn Lived Here', *The Times*, 12 July 2000, p. 20.

131 George Bernard Shaw, 'The Philanderer', *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams, 1934), pp. 28-61 (p. 28).

132 'High Class Residential Mansions', *The Times*, 2 September 1897, p. 12; See also Richard Dennis, *Cities in Modernity*, p. 246.

133 Sharon Marcus, *Apartment Stories: City and Home in Nineteenth-Century Paris and London* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), p. 106. In the article 'Buildings, Residences and Mansions', Richard Dennis also refers to the 'promiscuous use of space in a shared dwelling'. See Richard Dennis, 'Buildings, Residences and Mansions: George Gissing's 'prejudice against flats'', in *Gissing in the City: Cultural Crisis and the Making of Books in Late Victorian England*, ed. by John Spiers (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006), pp. 41-62 (p. 42).

areas of mansion flats were not shared in the way that lodgers would share space in a lodging house, there remained an indeterminacy about the level of discretion accorded to different areas of the building: corridors, lifts, lobbies, courtyards, and service was all communal. There were also, as Dennis notes, legal questions about whether mansion blocks 'should be treated as sets of "private" dwellings or "public" buildings'.¹³⁴ Although Dennis refers specially to the Queen Anne's Mansions, the unprecedented height of which produced difficulties for fire regulations, other mansion flats encountered similar difficulties as there existed no legal precedent for the delimitation of private and public spaces in these buildings. The promiscuous spaces of mansion flats extended to the inhabitants of these dwellings themselves, and in so doing engendered a charge of moral (most often sexual) impropriety. Victoria, the small district within the City of Westminster in which London's mansion flats were located, was just as untested and indeterminate as the mansion flat itself. A major thoroughfare created by a slum clearance project that began in 1847, Victoria Street was only completed at midcentury and became defined by these experimental new mansion flats which began to crop up near Pimlico. These unconventional buildings, which one commentator described as 'gigantic slum dwelling[s] for the rich', were criticised for what was considered to be their towering size of six storeys and irregular design.¹³⁵ Like Bloomsbury, the district seemed to be troubled by the spectre of the slums its buildings had replaced.¹³⁶ The novel brings the status of both districts into collision when Lady Dorothea, the woman who arranges for Sally's position in Brook Street, joins in on the society gossip about the relationship between Lord Kidderminster and Sally, and her new place of residence:

Oh I know all about it, everybody knows. But *why* did you take a flat in Victoria? It might just as well be Bloomsbury. Of course, when I went there, I had no idea it was your show! Who would have dreamt of your setting up house in Tillery Mansions? You really are unconventional. Kiddie, you do impossible things. Belgravia, now, or St. John's Wood, if you must have a flat. But Victoria [emphasis original]. (289)

134 Dennis, 'Babylonian Flats', p. 235.

135 Qtd. in Dennis, 'Babylonian Flats', p. 238.

136 For a consideration of slum clearance in Bloomsbury, see Chapter 2.2 of the present work.

Although Lord Kidderminster maintains he had nothing to do with her taking up residence in the Tillery Mansions and that Sally is the 'best and sweetest, and cleanest-minded, and purest girl [he's] met since [he's] been in London' (290), Lady Dorothea only laughs. Although Belgravia was a neighbourhood that was only established at the middle of the nineteenth century, much of it having been built by Thomas and Lewis Cubitt, it was intended for 'the "richest population in the world"'.¹³⁷ Given Lady Dorothea's social position, Belgravia would have been an acceptable neighbourhood in which to build a town mansion, as the Duke of Bedford famously chose to do rather than build one on his own estate in Bloomsbury.¹³⁸ However St. John's Wood, the neighbourhood suitable if one 'must have a flat', had a questionable reputation that persisted well into the twentieth century, and one which Elizabeth Bowen draws upon in *To The North* (1932):

They had gone to live in St John's Wood, that airy uphill neighbourhood where the white and buff-coloured houses, pilastered or gothic, seem to have been built in a grove. A fragrant, faint impropriety, orris-dust of a century, still hangs over part of this neighbourhood; glass passages lead in from high green gates, garden walls are mysterious, laburnums falling between the windows and walls have their own secrets. Acacias whisper at nights round airy, ornate little houses in which pretty women lived singly but were not always alone.¹³⁹

Lady Dorothea's suggestion that Lord Kidderminster place Sally in a flat in St. John's Wood, with the 'faint impropriety' that lingers even a century later, is snide and bathetic: his mistress, she suggests, should be established in a neighbourhood where her status as his mistress is at least made explicit.

Sally's rapid progress through the class system leaves her untrained in the rules of propriety that are associated with her new social position. Furthermore, it leaves her unaware that her career

¹³⁷ Qtd. in Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: 'A Human Awful Wonder of God'* (London: Jonathan Cape), p. 75.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Bowen, *To the North* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1932), p. 16. I am grateful to Emma Short for alerting me to this passage in Bowen's novel.

in the theatre and residence in a flat – in reality both testaments to her determination and independence – will compromise her reputation. When Colonel Fellows, a man who 'in the eyes of a girl of nineteen [...] was a very elderly gentleman' (269-70) attempts to win her favour with a necklace, he arrives at her flat unannounced only to find

evidence of Sally's industry. She was making herself under-garments, and had no false shame about it.

'They're so much cheaper to make at home,' she said, folding them neatly before putting them away. 'I'll clear the table, and then I can get you some tea. It was very kind of you to come and see me so soon.' (269)

The Colonel, perplexed by her unabashed efforts with the undergarments as much as he is by the subsequent gesture of conventional hospitality, is forced to leave with 'insincerity' on his own 'sub-conscious' as he is aware that Sally only 'thought he was being kind' (270). Although the narrator of *The Heart of a Child* defends Sally's virtue in a way that is designed to keep in check the reader's own prejudices or expectations, Lord Kidderminster succumbs to moral prejudice and sexual expectation in spite of his earlier advocacy of her moral integrity. After driving Sally home to the Tillery Mansions one evening and having rather too much wine, Lord Kidderminster dismisses the coachman and begins to accompany her upstairs. Sally expresses some misgiving: 'Are you coming in? [...] It's getting awfully late, isn't it?' (225). While Sally is 'fumbl[ing] for the switch of the electric light, [and] talking all the while' (225) Lord Kidderminster attempts to kiss her, but she 'pushe[s] him away with her elbow' and exclaims 'What rubbish you're saying. What's the matter with you, you look quite pale? [...] I say, you are in a funny humour; what's come over you?' (225). Still resolute, despite Sally's insistence that she 'cannot abide being touched' (226), Lord Kidderminster physically seizes her and kisses her aggressively. After 'struggl[ing], passionately, frantically, unmistakably to free herself from him' (226) she realises

[s]he had to fight him, she had boasted so often that she could take care of herself; now was the time to show it. And she proved it, up to the hilt; he gained nothing. The struggle was short [...] [he was] rejected,

contemptuously and angrily scorned. It was Lord Kidderminster who flung himself on the sofa now, hid his face in the cushion, and began to sob weakly. (227)

Sally defends herself against Lord Kidderminster's advances with her pride of strength and independence, the very qualities which have enabled her professional and social success. Similarly this scene allows Sally to redefine her flat at the Tillery Mansions as a space of self-determination, rather than exploitation – which is further accentuated by Lord Kidderminster's comic defeat and emasculation. While Lord Kidderminster is sobbing on the couch, Sally states plainly that '[he'd] best go'; she continues, 'You've spoiled my evening [...] I don't want you here any more' (227). The 'promiscuous space' of the mansion flat becomes here not symbolic of its inhabitants' sexual promiscuity but instead a space of fugitive and flexible meaning that allows conventional relationships between men and women to be redefined. When Lord Kidderminster next visits the Tillery Mansions in order to ask for Sally's forgiveness, again he visits late at night. This time when 'Sally came to the door of the flat in answer to his persistent knocking [...] she opened it only a little way, keeping the chain up' before demanding: 'What do you want!' (244). Although a romantic relationship between the two characters develops over the course of the narrative, in this scene Sally remains 'cold and undecided' (245) and insists that he leave. The flat allows Sally to evince self-determination: 'The door was shut in his face. He waited a few moments, hoping it would reopen, trying to talk through it. But Sally had banged it, and bolted it. He had no choice but to find his way downstairs again, and into the courtyard, where his hansom waited' (245). Sally makes use of her flat as a space of industry (in the making of undergarments, for instance), of rest and comfort, and of her own authority in regulating the behaviour of visitors and determining with whom she will share it. The social indeterminacy of the mansion flat is, therefore, marked out in this novel as the very feature that makes it hospitable to changing domestic practices and relationships.

In design, the mansion flats allowed for a woman's independent occupation of a self-

contained home that differed from the conventional family dwelling, and it was therefore seen as a threat to social stability. Women who lived in flats were criticised for their unconventional behaviour at best, and branded morally reprehensible at worst. Women were disruptive to the domestic order both in occupying their own flats and demanding the social freedom to visit men's flats.¹⁴⁰ Just as the 'meteoric' (6) narrative propels Sally away from the Soho Club, it also predictably precipitates her towards a happy marriage to Lord Kidderminster in which she will finally settle into a family home. However the novel's subtitle, 'being passages from the early life of Sally Snape, Lady Kidderminster', assures the reader that a conclusion of domestic felicity is never in question. What is in question throughout the novel, however, are the reader's expectations of the relationship between housing and social status. This is a novel that calls attention to the social complexity generated by changing ideologies about gender, class and domesticity at the end of the century.

The diversity of experience that women's dwellings allow for and enable is expressed in the divergent and often conflicting narratives that take into account these domestic experiments. The realism of a novel like Evelyn Sharp's *The Making of a Prig* embeds its narrative in the material detail of life in a middle-class woman's residence, whereas *A Victory Won* is anticipative of the social and emotional changes in women's lives such new forms of housing could make possible. *The Heart of a Child* is a rare account of the continuities between economically divergent forms of housing – from the slum to the mansion block – that points out their uncomfortable similarity where matters of women's independence are concerned. What is clear across all representations of women's dwellings in these novels is that new forms of housing were a response to changing social and material factors, but these buildings also instigated new practices that would continue to destabilise conventional gender ideologies and broaden dominant notions of domesticity.

140 Dennis, 'Buildings, Residences and Mansions', p. 48.

4

'THINKING MEN' AND THINKING WOMEN: SEXUALITY, CHRISTIANITY AND SETTLEMENT HOUSING

While model dwellings initiated a new framework for the conventional household through their aggregation of individual units, and women's housing redrafted domestic space partly by way of the gender defining principle of these buildings, the subject of the final section of this thesis considers a form of architecture that employs both of these adaptations: settlement houses. The settlement movement, which involved the 'location of educated workers [to] the squalid quarters of the poor, to help them by the contact of daily life', generated a substantial number of new domestic structures, both purpose-built and adapted for reuse.¹ These buildings are significant not least because they represent a unique attempt at the design and implementation of large-scale co-operative housing in London. While 'associated homes' that shared cooking or washing facilities gained the interest of the middle classes in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, these were often small-scale experiments involving two or three families; large-scale communal housing had otherwise been traditionally affiliated with religious groups.² Like model dwellings, settlement houses were designed on the principle of social aggregation and shared some communal facilities. However settlement houses were distinct because, unlike model dwellings or women's housing, these communal facilities were underpinned by a collective social project. The model for the settlement movement, as Henrietta Barnett explains, was initiated by university students or 'thinking men' at Oxford, some of whom left their colleges 'to spend a few weeks, some for the long vacation, while others [...] began their life's work, [and] took lodgings in East London'.³ These 'thinking men', together with Barnett and her husband Canon Samuel Barnett, were largely responsible for conceiving of the idea of the settlement and establishing the first and most widely-known example, Toynbee Hall. The scholastic heritage of these organisations generated a domestic design modelled in part on gender-segregated college residences; but unlike women's housing where the experience could be one of 'intense loneliness', women's settlement houses were organised on the principle of

1 T.C. Collings, 'The Settlements of London', *Leisure Hour*, July 1895, pp. 600-606 (p. 600).

2 Lynn F. Pearson, *The Architectural and Social History of Cooperative Living* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 3-9; p. 15.

3 Henrietta O. Barnett, 'The Beginning of Toynbee Hall', *The Nineteenth Century*, February 1903, pp. 306-314 (p. 309).

cooperative living.⁴ An article written for *Temple Bar* on 'Life in a Women's Settlement' records one woman's reflection that '[t]he life is like the life of a college – with its morning and evening prayers in a tiny chapel, its meals in common, its cheery intercourse, and mutual interests'.⁵

When Barnett refers to 'thinking men' she not only negates her own importance in laying the movement's foundations, but also understates the substantial role women played in the operation of settlement houses. Katharine Bradley notes that '[a]lthough women's settlements did not always have prominent public profiles, they were more numerous than male-dominated settlements and [women] worked in some of the most deprived areas in London'.⁶ Martha Vicinus has explored the ways that the 'ideological roots' of the settlement movement were laid earlier in the century by Octavia Hill and the Charity Organisation Society.⁷ More recently, Katherine Bentley Beaman has traced the historical lineage of women's involvement with settlement work and the network of personal relationships and professional opportunities it engendered.⁸ Both Diana Maltz and Seth Koven have produced compelling interdisciplinary work that examines the cross-class relationships between women that were fostered by the settlement movement, and the ways in which these relationships contributed to the formation of new identities.⁹ The settlement movement has also been of interest to architectural historians such as Deborah Weiner, who explains that the settlement house was the 'institution that epitomised the middle class [sic] cause of bringing culture to the poor', and remarks that the 'architectural expression of these institutions spoke [...] of the origins

4 'Where the Unmarried Live', *Woman's Herald*, 20 April 1893, p. 131.

5 V.C.H., 'Life at a Women's University Settlement', *Temple Bar*, April 1902, pp. 452-458 (p. 454).

6 Katharine Marie Bradley, 'Poverty and Philanthropy in East London 1918-1950: the University Settlements and the Urban Working Classes' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Centre for Contemporary British History, Institute of Historical Research, University of London, 2006), p. 47.

7 Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920* (London: Virago, 1985), p. 216.

8 Katherine Bentley Beaman, *Women and the Settlement Movement: Beauty for the People* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p. 47.

9 Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Seth Koven, *Slumming* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004). While Maltz's work focuses on the ways that communal aesthetic experience mediated cross-class relationships and 'acted to affirm bourgeois self-expression and self identification' (72), Koven's work focuses on the construction of masculine identity that was enabled by the settlement's homosocial environment and which was on occasion predicated by queer desire.

and ambitions' of social reform.¹⁰ What each of these studies makes clear is that the architecture of the settlement house was unique, as were the relationships it housed: for these new structures, as Vicinus points out, 'combined familiar structures of college with new public freedoms'.¹¹

This chapter is concerned not so much with charting the emergence of new architectural designs as it is with mapping the rhetorical strategies used to represent these settlement houses in women's fiction of the same period. The novels considered in this chapter focus on representations of both men's and women's settlements, and the ways that these communities and their buildings participated in the broader ideological reconceptualisation and architectural reordering of domestic space that took place at the end of the nineteenth century. As I have argued in previous sections of this thesis, these new patterns of domestic space emerged in part as a response to shifting ideologies about gender and the family – but so too did these new spaces *produce* new identities and subjectivities that diluted the representational power of the nuclear family as the most socially or economically productive form of household. It is important at this stage to provide a caveat to this argument which might, quite easily, be interpreted as a narrative of gradual liberation of the individual from the restrictive framework of the conventional heterosexual family unit. It is not my intention to imply here a hierarchy either in terms of social relationships or architectural design, but instead to call attention to a period in which close attention was paid to the diversity of domestic arrangements that necessarily existed in a city with an advanced and expanding economic system. I want to make the point that architectural responses to these changes were important in making materially *visible* the heterogeneity of domestic practice during this period. These architectural developments indicated that the social structures related to these spaces were as potentially malleable as domestic space itself. The first component of this chapter considers the ways that Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* (1897) intervenes in debates around new forms of urban housing, including settlement housing, to demonstrate the ways that these domestic shifts revealed

10 Deborah Weiner, *Architectural and Social Reform in Late-Victorian London* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 158.

11 Vicinus, p. 229.

the interrelatedness of economic and sexual power. The second component considers L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1896) in dialogue with Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888) in order to examine how Meade's novel investigates the ways that the conception of new housing had the capacity to reinvigorate religious belief in a period when urban poverty – and the processes of looking at and writing about this poverty – threatened religious conviction and commitment. While these novels differ in their representation of settlement houses, each of these texts give expression to the ways that new social and spatial arrangements brought into question the nature of women's relationships with the community, and with each other.

'Philanthropy is the Fashion':
The Politics of Economics in *Dear Faustina* (1897)

Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina* (1897) has been consistently interpreted as a novel that engages with, and on occasion mocks, late nineteenth-century characterisations of the independent urban working woman. The familiar narrative commences with Althea Vane's decision to relinquish the material comforts of her upper-class home and, with the guidance and encouragement of the New Woman figure Faustina Bateson, embrace socially progressive causes while co-habiting with her in a 'Chelsea flat'.¹² As Althea becomes disillusioned by Faustina's political and personal infidelity, however, she exchanges her commitment to the symbolic 'higher claims' (40) touted by Faustina for settlement work and a relationship with a man of her own social status. While nineteenth-century critics identified the novel as a 'satire' of women's charitable work, modern examinations have focused on the ways that the novel is preoccupied with recasting the independent woman's homosocial household with the more socially acceptable configuration of heteronormative domesticity.¹³ The novel's unmistakable and, according to Patricia Murphy, 'inappropriately intense same-sex friendship' has received some critical attention for the ways it epitomises the New

¹² Rhoda Broughton, *Dear Faustina* (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1897). Further references to this edition are given in parentheses after quotations in the text.

Woman's narrative function as a 'corrupting influence who undermines the stability of the family'.¹⁴ In the case of *Dear Faustina*, this perversion is carried to its logical (sexual) conclusion in the representation of Faustina as a 'concupiscent Sapphic villainess whose displays of affection greatly exceed the normative codes of female relationships, thereby suggesting through unmistakable homoerotic undertones an ambition to replace rather than promote heterosexual desire'.¹⁵ Lisa Hagar convincingly reads the novel's narrative of 'inversion' as one that is linked to the themes of social work explored by the text, and suggests that the 'cross-class relationship' between Althea and Faustina 'imagines lesbian desire in terms of philanthropic desire'.¹⁶ This thematic association, while important to acknowledge in any interpretation of the novel, is somewhat structurally incomplete. For while the purpose of social work is the driving force behind the two women's domestic alliance, it equally provides the impetus for the heterosexual union at the novel's end: motivated in part by romantic jealousy, Althea moves from Faustina's flat to the Canning Town Settlement where it is implied she begins a romance with her fellow worker, John Drake. Previous criticism by both Hagar and Murphy has provided insightful commentary on the rhetorical relationship between sexual inversion and the New Woman in *Dear Faustina*. I am therefore less concerned with the degree to which we can read this relationship as one of 'inversion', and more with the ways that the representation of domestic space draws out the complexities of sexual and financial power that existed in late nineteenth-century London. *Dear Faustina* explores in its representation of housing the ways that new domestic forms revealed the nuanced and inextricable relationship between economic and sexual power. The text draws on both the traditional and modern meaning of the word 'economic'. Only in the middle of the nineteenth century did the word develop its associations with the 'science of economics' or 'political economy' that today carry its

13 'Dear Faustina', *Bookman*, June 1897, p. 74. The review comments that Broughton 'makes her satire effective by keeping it within bounds, and keeping a few public-spirited persons and the general philanthropic idea from the lash'.

14 Patricia Murphy, 'Disdained and Disempowered: The "Inverted" New Woman in Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina*', *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 19.1 (2000), 57-79 (p. 62).

15 Murphy, p. 68.

16 Lisa Hagar, 'Slumming with the New Woman: *Fin de Siècle* Sexual Inversion, Reform Work and Sisterhood in Rhoda Broughton's *Dear Faustina*', *Women's Writing*, 14.3 (2007), 460-475 (p. 461).

principal weight in meaning. Before this time, the word was more closely associated with its Greek root *oikonomia*, which refers to the management of a household or a family.¹⁷ The text makes significant use of this ambivalent meaning, as it denotes the intimate relationship between the household – and the relationships that define it – and material wealth. *Dear Faustina* plays with this doubleness of meaning throughout, and in so doing generates points of opposition that are not resolved by the narrative. If the novel's plot follows a predictable pattern where, as Hagar explains, 'degenerate sexuality' is exchanged for the 'heteronormative institution of marriage', this is unsettled by these frequent episodes of textual ambivalence.¹⁸ As a result, any exchange that occurs in the narrative is unstable and indeterminate.

The pattern of 'exchange' that Hagar identifies in the narrative's treatment of sexuality occurs also in the novel's engagement with economics, or more specifically, paid and unpaid labour. While living with Faustina, who earns her income writing about controversial causes for the press, Althea only assists with this work for no financial recompense. In this sense, her efforts are aligned with traditional models of nineteenth-century charity. When Althea moves to the Canning Town Settlement at the novel's conclusion, her philanthropic efforts become modernised as a form of civic engagement. Although she earns no money during her stay at the Canning Town Settlement, she gains a greater degree of independence as one of the rewards of her labour. The professionalisation of women's social work in the latter half of the nineteenth century has, in recent years, received important and substantial attention in scholarship.¹⁹ Helen Meller explains that, alongside the shift in the status of women's work, by the century's end women's involvement with the poor 'offered social status and gave women a public role that could be defined as citizenship'.²⁰ This concept,

17 Walter W. Skeet, 'Economics', *A Concise Etymology of the English Language* (New York: Cosimo, 2005), p. 159.

18 Hagar, p. 462.

19 For example, see Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); Ellen Ross, *Shum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (London: Virago, 1992).

20 Helen Meller, 'Gender, Citizenship and the Making of the Modern Environment', in *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, ed. by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 12-30 (p. 14).

used to characterise women's involvement in local concerns was, as Meller notes, 'uniquely adaptable':

Citizenship became a loaded word, imbued with a meaning covering both a concern for the public sphere and altruistic concern for society's well-being. For all, suffragists, suffragettes and women opposed to female enfranchisement, the pursuit of citizenship was a way of proving their worth.²¹

Althea's transition from an 'independent living arrangement' as Faustina's 'quasi-spouse' to the Canning Town Settlement is complicated by the model of citizenship that Meller identifies.²² Although *Dear Faustina* pinpoints two distinct housing models that emerged in the late nineteenth century, the metropolitan flat and the settlement house, it does not champion one at the expense of the other but uses both to demonstrate how different domestic forms articulate the interconnectedness of sexual desire and economic power in unique ways. If lesbian desire is reimagined as philanthropic desire, as Hagar suggests, I would argue that heterosexual desire is aligned with this concept of citizenship – and in turn, greater political efficacy. The heterosexual romantic union at the novel's end is therefore as political as it is romantic: citizenship allows Althea to cultivate a public role and 'prove her worth' in a way companionate philanthropy cannot. In what follows, I consider how the novel's textual ambivalence about sexuality and economics (in both the sense of financial and domestic materialities) undermines its seemingly traditional plot structure; I then look to the formal qualities of the dialogue in the narrative to explore how omission and elision perform a related task.

I

In *Dear Faustina*, the domestic companionship that develops between Althea and Faustina is complicated by the social difference that exists between the two women. The relationship is cross-

21 Meller, p. 14. For the relationship between materialism and citizenship see Seth Koven and Sonja Michael eds., *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (London: Routledge, 1993). See also Gabrielle Mearns, "'Long Trudges Through Whitechapel': The East End of Beatrice Webb's and Clara Collet's Social Investigations", *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth-Century*, 13 (2011), n.p. <<http://www.19.bbk.ac.uk/articles/10.16995/ntn.634/>> [accessed 9 November 2012]

22 Murphy, p. 57.

class, as Hagar observes, yet this dynamic is employed to different purpose than it is in the other narratives she refers to in 'Slumming with the New Woman', and those that form the material of analysis for Seth Koven's influential examination of 'cross-class sisterhood' in *Slumming*.²³ Unlike Vernon Lee's *Miss Brown* (1884) and L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895), the two novels studied in Koven's text, the balance of power in the cross-class relationship represented in *Dear Faustina* does not favour the upper-class Althea Vane, the character who might be perceived to go 'slumming'; instead, it sits perceptibly with the lower middle-class Faustina Bateson.²⁴ The narrative purpose of this inversion, which is part of Broughton's satirical mode, is clear: the psychological power that Faustina exercises over Althea is uncomfortable not only for its transgression of the boundaries of women's friendships, but also because this power is a threat to social stability as maintained through the class hierarchy. It is made clear early in the text that Faustina is not bound by the same moral or social codes as those people she considers her peers. An exchange at the novel's beginning, at which point Faustina invites Althea to share a 'home where there may not be a great many silver spoons [...] but where work and aspiration and love will certainly not be lacking' (45), brings into collision the novel's concern with economics and sexuality. This instance also reveals to the reader the ways that, as Murphy explains, 'female affection is transposed from a relatively covert to an unmistakably overt plane to provide a vehicle for indicating both the character and her social agenda as transgressions against the rules of nature'.²⁵ The social agenda to which Murphy refers is Faustina's ostensible commitment to exposing the oppressed position of the working classes through social investigation and journalism; or as she describes it, 'getting up the subject of the Housing of the Working Classes' (46). However Faustina's 'social agenda' can also be interpreted as a crucial part of her own character, as can her desire to consolidate authority in her own home by conscripting Althea to act as her 'quasi-spouse'.²⁶ In an often-quoted passage, Faustina

23 Hagar, p. 461; Koven, p. 183.

24 For a consideration of this dynamic in L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter*, see Chapter 4.2 of the present work.

25 Murphy, p. 62.

26 Ibid., p. 57.

explains to Althea, 'if you bless my home with your sweet presence, your sovereignty over my heart will be absolutely unshared', to which Althea 'quivers' and replies, 'I am sure I don't know what you see in me' (47). Gradually, the novel reveals that it is power, specifically the agency attendant to Althea's higher social status, that draws Faustina to her. The text implies that Faustina exploits Althea emotionally in order to put her social power to political use. In order to do so, Faustina reproduces and exploits the gender hierarchy associated with the conventional middle-class home; in this sense, she is fully aware that Althea's social status as an upper-class woman affords to her as many weaknesses as it does capabilities. The language used in the passage quoted above, particularly a phrase like 'sweet presence', is reminiscent of Ruskin's description of women's domestic capacities as uniquely suited to 'sweet ordering, arrangement and decision'; and the 'sovereignty' that Althea is promised to hold over Faustina's heart recalls the 'queenly power' of women 'within their sphere' that is referred to by the title 'Of Queen's Gardens'.²⁷ In using such language Faustina indicates that, despite transgressions of gender and sexuality, their relationship will be structured along traditionalist domestic patterns.

Faustina demands a level of emotional and professional companionship from Althea that replicates the power dynamic of the heteronormative domestic conventions to which she apparently capitulates at the novel's end. As Murphy acknowledges, 'Faustina addresses Althea like a smitten swain', and upon Althea's arrival at the fourth-floor flat in More Mansions exclaims, 'My darling! I have you at last! I was terrified lest at the final moment Philistia might triumph over me but here you are – here WE are – and can earth give anything better?' (72).²⁸ At this point, Althea bursts into tears. The dialogue in this scene draws on the exaggerated emotions and archetypal characters of melodrama, but parodies these conventions for the purpose of capturing the ambivalence that is produced by such extreme representations; that is, extremes rely on difference and therefore must produce their opposite as they are called into being. In *Dear Faustina*, this representational

²⁷ John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies* (New York: Henry Holt, 1901), p. 83; p. 69.

²⁸ Murphy, p. 69.

inversion produces parody; but it is not so straightforward as to mock the women themselves, but instead satirises the conventional heterosexual model that Faustina puts to her own service. Here, the text lays bare the absurdity of the forms – both literary and social – it imitates. The novel is replete with sentimental dialogue, and a style of narration that contributes to the uneasiness by winking at the 'high pitch of tension' (73) that exists between the two women.

More Mansions, where Faustina and Althea share an apartment, is described as one of the women's residences or 'ladies' chambers' that were constructed during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.²⁹ As the narrator comments, 'More Mansions is one of those blocks of towering jerry buildings that have sprung up within the last three years to meet the requirements and match the purses of independent female spirits, imprudent marriages and narrow incomes' (73), and thereby offers a cynical although fairly accurate assessment of the origin of women's housing. While those buildings discussed in the previous chapter such as the Chenies Street Chambers and Sloane House Gardens were architect-designed and quality-built – and for this reason remain a part of the city's landscape today – a significant number of 'jerry-built' structures appeared during the housing shortage of the mid-1880s.³⁰ Most often built on speculation by enterprising individuals, such housing was constructed quickly and cheaply. These buildings were, of course, not restricted to women's housing but permeated the entire sector. The description of More Mansions in *Dear Faustina* as a structure that is 'jerry-built' suggests the poor quality of the building, but also symbolises the domestic economy that exists within the building. Like the building itself, the relationship between Althea and Faustina is assumed to be one of convenience and its duration only temporary. As discussed in the previous chapter, women's dwellings were culturally understood as transitional spaces that were acceptable only until a more suitable home was made available by way of marriage, even if this was not the case in practice.³¹ The novel, therefore, plays on the presumption that the women's relationship – like the building itself – exists only for the sake of

29 For a more extensive treatment of women's housing, see Chapter 3 of the present work.

30 Stephen Inwood, *City of Cities: the Birth of Modern London* (London: Macmillan, 2005), p. 90; pp. 184-185.

31 For a more thorough consideration of this phenomenon, see Chapter 3.3 of the present work.

convenience. *Dear Faustina* makes use of the symbolic power of women's housing as temporary structures for temporary relationships, but in narrative terms their relationship is represented as untenable on account of its inequality. Faustina is the novel's melodramatic villain (a role made apparent not least of all by her name): she exploits Althea emotionally, and sexually, it is implied, for her own professional gain.³² Yet Althea is eager to resign her independence, feeling 'not fit to take any initiative', but wishing to 'help [Faustina] directly in her own work – [and] to “devil” for her' (85). The unequal relationship, in which both women willingly participate, exposes systems of sexual and economic power that exist not just in their own relationship – but in the more conventional systems on which they have modelled their household.

While terms such as 'exchange' or 'inversion' have most often been used to define the narrative pattern of *Dear Faustina*, 'ambivalence' is more accurate on account of the instability and asymmetry of romantic, political and architectural paradigms represented in this novel. Just as the relationship between the two women is not the focus of the narrative's parody, neither is it the principal threat. The figure of the 'sublimated lesbian', to use Scott Herring's term, in nineteenth-century fiction threatened to undermine the heterosexual family and along with it domesticity itself.³³ Yet it is the case that characters such as Olive Chancellor in Henry James's *The Bostonians* (1886) or Bell Blount in Eliza Lynn Linton's *The Rebel of the Family* (1880) do not challenge heterosexual domestic conventions so much as they reproduce them. This observation has been made in previous studies and has achieved currency most widely through Judith Butler's analysis of drag: she points out that the power – and therefore threat – of imitation is that it reveals there *is* no original. Not only do these imitations 'make us question what is real, and what “must” be, but they

32 Lisa Hagar offers an interesting account of the names in *Dear Faustina*, and suggests that the names Althea and Faustina come from 'earlier nineteenth-century texts that deal explicitly with lesbian desire' (p. 474, n9). She also notes, as does Patricia Murphy, that the name evokes Swinburne's demonic woman in his 1862 poem 'Faustine' (68). What passes unglossed in most studies is the allusion to the titular character of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (1592). In using such a name Broughton parodies the moral dilemma presented to Faustus in the original text. The subtext of *Dear Faustina* implies that Faustina's impulse for power and knowledge is not motivated by greed and vanity, but by poverty; her 'choice' is decided for her by economic necessity.

33 Scott Herring, *Queering the Underworld: Slumming, Literature and the Undoing of Lesbian and Gay History* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007), p. 32.

also show us how the norms that govern contemporary notions of reality can be questioned and how new modes can become instituted'.³⁴ What enables this imitation is what Butler describes as 'transferability of the attribute', and it is partly this notion that has informed my understanding of the ways that ambivalence works in *Dear Faustina*.³⁵ As I have argued, Faustina models her romantic relationship with Althea on heterosexual marriage for the purpose of exploiting the uneven power dynamic of this system. The formal ambivalence produced in the text by this parody functions as criticism of the original (heterosexual) model, as much as it does the (homosexual) imitation.

While Hagar suggests that the discourse around the New Woman was often associated with women's social work, Ruth Livesey notes that the term – out of date as it was by the end of the century – 'represented a radical break with the discourse of duty, self-sacrifice and altruism so deeply imbricated in nineteenth-century constructions of bourgeois femininity'.³⁶ What was therefore 'new' and most menacing about this figure was not only expressed by way of sexuality but the 'representation of motivation': self-sacrifice was exchanged for self-interest.³⁷ *Dear Faustina* complicates the accepted definition of self-interest as the obverse of self-sacrifice, for in the novel self-interest is given the important complication of Faustina's lower-class status. While it is implied that Faustina is from a lower middle-class or upper working-class background, her specific class position remains unclear. The omission of such information is a crucial aspect of the text, and one I return to in the following section. However here I would like to establish that Faustina is a threat not only because she addresses Althea as would 'a man in love' (96-7), and in so doing assumes a man's power in the domestic sphere; she is also a threat because, despite her lower-class status, she manages to consolidate social power over Althea. The threat represented here is that of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) but played out using not only the transgressions of class, but also those of

34 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 29. See also 'Conclusion: From Parody to Politics', in Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

35 Butler, *Undoing Gender*, p. 213.

36 Hagar, p. 465; Ruth Livesey, 'Women, Class and Social Action in Late-Victorian and Edwardian London', (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Warwick, 1999), p. 99.

37 Livesey, p. 103.

gender and sexuality. While Faustina's coarse language and indelicate sensibilities mark her as unmistakably lower class, so does the 'not particularly clean' (72) domestic space the women share in *More Mansions* give shape to the threat of self-interest in matters of sex and economics. In the novel, the threat of sexual transgression is made painfully explicit for the purpose of rendering the menace of class mobility only partly perceptible, and equally dangerous on account of its obscurity. Both Faustina's lower-class background and her preoccupation with her career proves perilous to the sanctity of bourgeois femininity and the queenly domesticity with which it is associated. While living at *More Mansions* Althea discovers 'how very late a general servant can get up in the morning; how very cold a hot bath can be; how very crumpled a table cloth' (91). Whereas 'Faustina belongs to that class of persons – there is a large one – to whom minor discomforts of life are absolute indifference, [and h]er iron health and steel nerves enable her to face any kind of food without aversion' (92), Althea's diet had been reduced to 'chiefly that of a monkey in the tropics – viz., oranges, bananas and coco-nuts' (92).

It is not only Faustina's association with a certain 'class of persons' (92) that wreaks such havoc on the domestic space of *More Mansions*, it is also her engagement with social causes: for in Faustina's case, a dedication to the working classes doubles as a form of self-interest. In this sense, Faustina is philanthropic – dedicating her employ to the improvement of urban conditions – as well as self-concerned, in the sense that she aims to earn an income to improve the condition of her *own* comparative poverty. When Althea's sister, Mrs. Boteler, visits the flat she exclaims, 'What a dog-hole! and *how* untidy!' (237); Althea explains to her that '[v]ery busy people cannot have everything in as apple-pie order as those who do nothing, and have a score of lackeys to help them' (237). Despite this initial defence, however, Althea's subordinate position in the household requires her to explain demurely: 'We are not generally in such disorder; but just before she left Faustina turned out a whole drawer full of papers in a search of a list of members of a society' (238). While the flat at *More Mansions* is indeed 'an alternative domestic space', as Murphy describes it, this is not only on

account of its association with sexual transgression but also for the ways the domestic economy of this new space renders legible the involute connections between sexual desire and labour in late nineteenth-century London.³⁸ Like its use of exaggeration and hyperbole, the narrative trajectory of *Dear Faustina* follows the conventions of the melodrama: that which is thrown into complication and disarray over the course of the narrative is resolved and reinstated at the plot's *denouement*. This is what Murphy and Hagar refer to when they suggest that Althea is 'rescued' from the perverse domestic arrangement at More Mansions, and put into place at the Canning Town Settlement where she is given the promise of heterosexual romance. I would like to complicate this argument by suggesting that the narrative's rising action does not so much throw order into disarray as it exposes existing complexity, or what I have termed ambivalence. Therefore the novel's resolution does not redact this ambivalence, but instead submerges it into dominant sexual and economic forms. The submerged elements of the narrative break through the text in its representation of absence, elision and omission, which I examine in the second part of this section.

Novels such as *A Victory Won* and *The Making of a Prig* draw on the cultural associations of women's housing as temporary and transitional spaces in order to impel their protagonists into conventional domestic space at the point of resolution, and this is the very narrative process that is satirised in *The Heart of a Child*. This convention appears in *Dear Faustina*, but like other aspects of the novel its textual power is challenged by those qualities that govern the linear trajectory of the plot: once again, the related forces of sexuality and economics. Where sexuality is concerned, the reader is given a clue early in the novel that Althea's companionate role in Faustina's life may only be temporary. When Faustina offers to help Althea through the 'painful process' of 'development, [and] growth' (44) while sharing her flat, Althea asks if there was not 'another friend [who] shared your life – lived with you?' (46). Faustina is quick to explain that she and the friend 'have agreed to part' as 'for some time [they] had been developing in opposite directions' (47). Such language represents Faustina as a force of social and narrative progressiveness – here the social subject is the

38 Murphy, p. 70; p. 69.

'employment of infant labour' (47). The retrogressive 'opposite direction' in which Faustina's 'friend' develops indicates her ambivalence around this social issue, but is also a harbinger of the textual ambivalence that exists alongside the narrative's seemingly straight-forward linear structure: Althea may be 'rescued' by the novel's hero figure John Drake, but she is compelled to repeat the same narrative function as her predecessor at More Mansions. On the first occasion of meeting John Drake, who functions as Faustina's sexual and social foil, Althea asks whether he knew '[her] predecessor, Miss Lewis' (108). Drake first gives a 'helpless laugh' (108) before explaining:

'Oh, rather! I beg your pardon – yes, I did know that lady...I not only knew Miss Lewis, but *her* predecessor.'

'Had she a predecessor?'

'Oh yes, more than one'.

Althea starts slightly. She feels as if a sharp pebble had hit her – small, but unexpected. (108-109)

The conversation causes Althea to view her position in the household as provisional, and unsurprisingly, incites her jealousy. When Althea attempts to unearth more information about Miss Lewis she is surprised to hear Faustina describe her as a 'faddist' who left Faustina with only a sense of 'disillusion[ment]' (96). Murphy makes the important point that these references to Miss Lewis 'betray a note of jealousy about Faustina's erotic inconsistencies', and that Althea 'assumes the role of a jilted lover' when she realises she herself might be replaced.³⁹ However I would like to suggest that in addition to sexual jealousy, Althea's anger and frustration result equally from the threat of losing the economic power she has access to on account of this relationship. More simply, losing Faustina's affection means also losing her new-found social and financial agency. It is worth remembering that Althea's decision to share Faustina's flat was motivated by her 'vital' (39) dedication to their friendship. The ambiguity of such a word, picked up on by Althea's sister earlier in the novel, betrays her romantic interest but also her economic dependence on this friendship after Althea is cast off by her family. Threatened with the dissolution of her vicarious access to these

³⁹ Murphy, p. 71.

forms of power, Althea shifts her romantic and economic interests by changing her philanthropic commitment. It is in this way that *Dear Faustina* intervenes in contemporary debates about women's civic participation, and the processes by which concepts of citizenship began to translate women's domestic role from one based in the conventional home to one focused on the community. Katharine Bradley explains that '[c]itizenship was far from being a purely political phenomenon' and that although it was connected to civic participation and the right to vote, it was also associated with the 'attainment of adulthood'.⁴⁰ What has been perceived as Althea's shift in desire is in this text is inextricably linked to the pursuit of 'adulthood', not only in terms of sexual maturity, but also as it is understood in relation to economic and political self-determination. Althea's move from More Mansions to the Canning Town Settlement – an institution that Bradley reminds us 'existed to expand the notion of citizenship' – must be understood to be as much motivated by her desire for civic engagement and economic independence as it is a capitulation to conventional forms of sexuality.

II

Althea's departure from More Mansions to the Canning Town Settlement has been interpreted by Martha Vicinus as a version of the 'rescue narrative' in which a 'handsome man rescues an innocent young woman from the clutches of an older woman'.⁴¹ In the case of *Dear Faustina* it is John Drake who functions as the 'handsome man', but the text is not so straightforward as to place Althea entirely in his power. After all, she leaves More Mansions of her own volition and at the novel's end lives not with her 'rescuer' but in a community of other women at the Canning Town Settlement, a network that Herring notes was 'structured on female intimacy'.⁴² A contemporary review in the *Bookman* notes that 'Miss Broughton resists the temptation of sending Althea permanently back to domesticity when her disillusionment takes place'.⁴³ After a brief sojourn staying with her sister,

⁴⁰ Bradley, p. 21.

⁴¹ Qtd. in Hagar, p. 461.

⁴² Herring, p. 32.

⁴³ 'Dear Faustina', *Bookman*, June 1897, p. 74.

where Althea proves herself unsuitable for conventional domesticity after criticising the exploitative practices used for the manufacture of her niece's toys, she agrees to live and work at the Canning Town Settlement near the docks in East London.

The Canning Town Settlement was, according to the American social activist and settlement worker Alice Paul, 'one of the most famous [settlements] in London'.⁴⁴ The Canning Town Settlement was located in London's docklands on the north side of the Thames, an area notorious for its poverty and what one journalist describes as 'the problem of the unemployed'.⁴⁵ When Paul arrived in London's docklands in 1907, she settled nearby in a house that was managed by the Charity Organisation Society and – after disguising herself as a member of the 'labouring classes' – found a job working twelve-hour days in a rubber factory, 'threading cords into automobile tires'.⁴⁶ The chief problem of work at the docklands, Paul discovered, was not unemployment but underemployment: the only work available was casual labour, which meant that the docklands was a neighbourhood of individuals who had no fixed income and most often no fixed address.⁴⁷ In 'The Settlements of London', an article written for *The Leisure Hour* a decade before Paul's arrival, T.C. Collings comments on the problems of the dockland's casual labour pool. The Canning Town Settlement, he suggests, was established in part to help alleviate the burdens of underemployment. At the Albert and Victoria Docks, Collings notes,

the gates used to be besieged every morning by huge armies of casual labourers, struggling for the chance of a day's work. Gasworks, ironworks, and factories of various kinds give a fluctuating demand for labour. Here the [Canning Town] Settlement was founded for practical helpfulness, in the spirit of Jesus Christ, in all that affects human life.⁴⁸

The Canning Town Settlement, or Mansfield House as the Men's Settlement was also known, was not, in fact, a religious settlement. Members of the settlement engaged in 'both secular and religious

44 Qtd. in J.D. Zahniser and Amelia R. Fry, *Alice Paul: Claiming Power* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 48.

45 'Women's Settlements in London', *The Speaker*, 10 February 1894, p. 164.

46 Zahniser and Fry, pp. 48-49.

47 Ibid.

48 T.C. Collings, 'The Settlements of London', *The Leisure Hour*, July 1895, pp. 600-606 (p. 601).

work', and much like Toynbee Hall, it resisted affiliation with a specific Christian denomination.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, much of the activity at Mansfield House was structured around religious campaigns. For instance, Collings describes the 'characteristic' activity of the Settlement as its 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' at Congregational Chapel, which provides local men with access to music concerts and lectures on various subjects from professors and parliamentarians.⁵⁰ Other Settlement activities included a children's 'Happy Sunday Evening', or Sunday School, a worship hour followed by bible class and hymn singing, and a Brotherhood Society, which consisted of 'several hundred men and women bound together by a pledge "to serve humanity in the spirit of Jesus"'.⁵¹ Diana Maltz and Deborah Weiner have each explored the ways that the social activities of settlements, regardless of their particular religious affiliation, were often structured on economic and social divisions. At Toynbee Hall, the project of elevating the soul through the senses – what Maltz effectively describes as 'missionary aestheticism' – relied on solidly middle-class notions of culture in the aspiration to a 'communal aesthetic revelation'.⁵² Deborah Weiner explains that Toynbee Hall's 'self-consciously paternalistic architecture' evinced the social hierarchies of the university quadrangles that had influenced its design.⁵³ At avowedly religious settlements such as Oxford House, which was strongly affiliated with the Anglican Church, the spiritual hierarchy on which the settlement was organised was recast and made evident in its public outreach activities. As such, settlements like the Canning Town Settlement were often structured on similar social divisions to those which they sought to expunge. An evaluation of the settlement movement's success in abolishing social and economic divisions unfortunately exceeds the parameters of the present argument. However, it is worth noting that the founders of Toynbee Hall, the Reverend (later Canon) Samuel Barnett and his wife Henrietta Barnett, believed that the settlement movement challenged conventional models

49 'Women's Settlements in London', p. 164. In 'The Settlements of London', Collings explains that 'Oxford House is distinctly a centre for Christian teaching, and most other settlements avow religious aims. Toynbee Hall makes general culture its special mission and uses art, for example, as a means to refine and purify' (Collings, p. 600).

50 Collings, pp. 602-603.

51 Ibid.

52 Maltz, pp. 1-4 (p. 1)

53 Weiner, p. 168.

of philanthropy. The settlement movement, Barnett notes, was the first social project where reforms did not '[end] in the assertion of rights over [the working] class'.⁵⁴ Thirty years after founding Toynbee Hall, Henrietta Barnett reminded readers in the essay collection *Practicable Socialism* that 'the crucial question for all social work should be "Is our aim the self-extinction of our organisation?"'.⁵⁵ The foundational principles of social work upon which many settlements were based differed from earlier models of nineteenth-century philanthropy in the sense that, as Barnett remarks, the objective of these organisations was to make their very purpose redundant. In practice, however, the social customs of these settlements – steeped as they were in the ancient social and intellectual cultures of the church and the university – often abraded their egalitarian ambitions.

In *Dear Faustina*, the representation of the social divisions on which the settlement movement was based – whether between rich and poor, cultured and unrefined, clergy and lay person – help to fulfil the generic conventions of melodrama that require the restoration of the social order. Althea's engagement at the Canning Town Settlement serves this purpose by way of consolidating her authority over the working-class women among whom she lives. Yet not all of the issues and oppositions raised by the text are reconciled at the narrative's conclusion. These oppositions produce the points of textual ambivalence that interrupt and undermine the narrative progress. It is at the novel's conclusion – the point of John Drake's 'rescue', when narrative disorder seems to be corrected – that this textual ambivalence is most perceptible. The representation of the Canning Town Settlement where John Drake lives 'for months at a time, organizing meetings, giving lectures, and so forth' (123), in part corrects the disorder initiated by the unconventional romantic relationship that dominates the first half of the novel. As stated, the Canning Town Settlement was structured on economic difference that was given evidence in its social and architectural organisation. The Canning Town Settlement was a large complex of buildings along Barking Road, all of which were converted for purpose, until the construction of a new residential

54 Canon S.A. Barnett and Mrs. S.A. [Henrietta] Barnett, *Practicable Socialism* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915), p. viii.

55 Ibid., p. x.

hall at 83-93 Barking Road in 1897.⁵⁶ The women's branch of the Canning Town Settlement, also known as Mansfield Women's Headquarters, was separated by some distance from the men's settlement at 461 Barking Road. While the men's settlement, Mansfield House, retained close connections with the Women's Headquarters, their activities were distinct and their independence was given authority by their separate operational and residential quarters. This division was typical of most settlements in the period; a survey conducted before WWI found that 22 settlements were inhabited exclusively by women and 17 by men, and only six combined men and women. The combined settlements typically distinguished between men's and women's activities, as did Oxford House and the Ladies' Branch of Oxford House.⁵⁷ Bentley Beaman suggests that these women 'were far removed from the popular image of affluent irritating do-gooders, nor did they regard themselves as part of a single-sex institution in the vanguard of female emancipation'.⁵⁸ The claim that these women did *not* view themselves as part of a single-sex institution is contentious, particularly after the work that Vicinus has done to indicate the ways that such new communities were often self-conscious about their challenge to normative femininity. The activities of the women's settlement were diverse, and included everything from lithographing sheet music and visiting on behalf of the Sick Benefit Society to classes on bandaging, poulticing, mathematics and physiology. There were also literary and cultural activities coordinated by the Women's Co-operative Guild, and a weekly bible class for local residents.⁵⁹

The representation of the Women's Headquarters at Mansfield House in *Dear Faustina* differs considerably from a contemporaneous article that describes the work of the women who 'live there and help' as 'admirable', and which gives no indication that the local women who attend its activities are anything other than cooperative and 'reliable'.⁶⁰ Althea, who has more time at her

56 Another larger residential hall, Fairbairn Hall, was completed in 1900. 'West Ham Philanthropic Institutions', British History Online. <www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=42763>. [accessed 4 August 2014]

57 Katherine Bentley Beaman, *Women and the Settlement Movement* (London and New York: the Radcliffe Press, 1996), p. xxv; p. xxii.

58 Bentley Beaman, p. xxii.

59 Collings, p. 605.

60 Ibid.

disposal on account of Faustina's growing interest in another young woman, Cressida Delafield, is invited to visit the Canning Town Settlement by Drake who 'call[s] to his aid a female friend and fellow worker of his own, who, with a newly-married and like-minded husband has pitched her tent in the settlement' (251). Althea is therefore inducted into her new position as settlement worker at the same time as she is reinitiated into a heterosocial environment that holds the promise of heterosexual marriage. This is a moment at which the formerly indistinct boundaries of gender and sexuality are reinscribed, and is also a point at which class divisions are rearticulated. On one occasion, after Althea visits 'each and every portion of the work – infirmary, lodging house, recreation hall, lads' club, residence, etc.' (252), she is invited to 'give tea and entertainment to the factory girls' (255). On account of her ignorance and 'prudery' (251), however, Althea has encouraged the regular attendees to bring their friends, who Drake warns are 'often job hands, [and] who are much rougher than the regular ones. They are of the class that goes hop-picking, and have not a very high-standard of politeness' (255-6). The situation is made more doubtful when they find that the function has been arranged to take place not in the large recreation hall, but in a smaller room that quickly fills to capacity. At first there is only 'a pushing and a hustling – perfectly good humoured' (258), but soon the crowd becomes uncontrollable. At the tea table, the 'limits assigned to [Althea's] sway have been so hopelessly overstepped that she begins to very seriously wish that she could get behind the board that groans with her intended hospitality' (259-60). Both the language and the symbolism of this incident collect several important narrative themes. Althea's preoccupation with the tea table articulates her struggle to access and assert economic – that is household – power; here the factory workers threaten to transgress these boundaries, but when she is pinned against the tea table during a rush – and in a very literal expression of Vicinus's 'rescue narrative', is saved by Drake – the crisis resolves social and sexual transgressions. For not only does Drake prevent the factory workers from 'squeezing the life out of [Althea]' (268), he is the only figure in the room able to command the crowd's attention. Drake's initial and rather bizarre

attempt at crowd control is his performance of a 'swaggering sailor song' (264), which understandably inspires much 'punching and giggling' and applause amongst the ladies (260). After the rush on the tea table, Drake reproaches the 'rioters' with a 'voice that rings out clear and sharp' and there is an 'evident, though only partial, effort to obey him' (263-4). Drake then poses a series of patronising questions intended to inhibit and ingratiate the audience: 'Are you not ashamed of yourselves?', followed by 'Is this your gratitude to the lady who is so kindly giving you entertainment?', and finally, 'If this is the way that we treat her do you think that she is very likely to come among us again?' (264). Drake's questioning subdues most of the unruly attendants, but order is finally restored with the arrival of 'several male members from the Settlement' (265). The factory workers then leave, offering their apologies and appreciation to the organisers. Much of the scholarship on the settlement movement suggests precisely what is underscored at this point in the text: that while these projects aspired to create cross-class communities and support egalitarian relationships, more often they reinforced the power structures evident in earlier models of philanthropy.⁶¹ And indeed, the text comments explicitly on Althea's naivety in her attempt to 'humanize' (256) the factory workers just as it acknowledges that not all attendees are 'subdued by the authority of [Drake's] tones' or his 'bracketing himself with them' (264) in the course of his questioning.

Although this scene is an expression of social control, Althea also uses the experience as an opportunity for self-reform: she attempts to evince the self-determination she has previously failed to exhibit. After the riot, Althea refuses the opportunity to rest or recover, and instead insists on serving tea and planning for the next function. The implication is that this performance of domestic service has rehabilitated Althea to a position of conventional femininity, and this is made explicit when at the chapter's end she explains to Drake that 'if it were not for Faustina and all I owe her I

⁶¹ Nigel Scotland, *Squires in the Slums: Settlements and Missions in Late Victorian London* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 197-210. See also Maltz, pp. 67-97. For the ways in which these power structures are connected to sexual identities see Koven, 'The "New Man" in the Slums: Religion, Masculinity, and the Men's Settlement House Movement', in *Slumming*, pp. 228-281.

should like to come among you for good!' (269). While this statement – read alongside an earlier scene in the novel in which Althea and Drake discuss their respective ambitions in a church – offers the promise of heterosexual union and economic resolution, the tea table riot dramatises the energy that has been raised by text's questioning of social issues.⁶² This event also comically underscores the utter impossibility of containing this energy by the performance of a sailor's song, or the offer of a cup of tea. While this scene seems to be the novel's climax, and a point at which earlier sexual and economic transgressions are corrected, it is a false resolution, for it is undermined once again by ambivalence. If Althea's engagement with social action was first structured by her companionate but exploitative relationship with Faustina, it would seem that settlement work might offer her a greater possibility of civic engagement even if she is 'normalized by being relocated from a tainted and threatening female-controlled environment to an approved male-dominated environment', as Murphy understands.⁶³ What are we, then, to make of the novel's conclusion in which Althea moves to the women's settlement at Canning Town and begins a co-operative workroom? Hagar focuses on the ways that teaching 'the fine delicacies and intricacies of decorative needlework' will 'take place within a domestic model with all the power located in the patriarch, Drake'.⁶⁴ While Althea does wish for Drake to 'guide her', as Hagar acknowledges, the text undermines what Hagar defines as the 'power of the patriarch' by way of irony and intertextuality. Both Hagar and Murphy refer to an instance at the novel's end which results in Althea's decision to initiate a co-operative workroom at the women's settlement, but neither critic explores this scene or its implications fully. As Drake explains, at the women's settlement '[t]he residents are boarded and lodged; each has a little room of her own, and common sitting and dining rooms; and each takes up a special branch of work' (395). While Althea is convinced she has no special skill to offer, Drake reminds her that 'like

62 It is possible that the tea table riot of this scene is Broughton's snide reference to Frank Norris's caustic (and explicitly gendered) description of realism as the 'drama of a broken teacup'. With this derisive remark, he was referring in particular to the American author William Dean Howells, but the criticism was often expanded to encompass subjects and authors of any sort of perceived gentility. See G.R. Thompson, *Reading the American Novel 1865-1914* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), pp. 41-42.

63 Murphy, p. 57.

64 Hagar, p. 471.

Desdemona, she is “delicate with her needle” (396). While Murphy interprets needlework as a 'signifier of domesticity and suitable feminine endeavour', at the point that Othello makes this statement in Shakespeare's play it is doubly significant:

Hang her! I do but say what she is: so delicate
with her needle: an admirable musician: O! she
will sing the savageness out of a bear: of so high
and plenteous wit and invention: — ⁶⁵

In this scene, Iago convinces Othello that Desdemona has casually given his mother's handkerchief to Cassio who 'hath given it to his whore', which incites Othello's jealousy.⁶⁶ His remark about her delicacy with the needle corroborates the domesticity and femininity to which Murphy refers – but it concomitantly denotes its opposite: 'savageness' and her capacity to '[out-]wit' those around her through creative invention that is a form of social artistry. It would of course be a fallacy to compare Drake and Althea to Othello and Desdemona; what is important here is the text's double meaning. Althea may have found a domestic space where, as Kate Flint explains, 'her philanthropy and (in relation to [Drake]) affections can more properly be channelled', but crucially, she also thinks of her own needs and comfort.⁶⁷ This doubleness is a significant aspect of the text, and one that is imbedded in Meller's concept of citizenship. Meller acknowledges the very word 'citizenship' was 'loaded' and 'imbued with meaning': both a 'concern for the public sphere' and an ambition of 'proving their worth'.⁶⁸ If nineteenth-century models of philanthropy were aligned with popular notions of women's sacrifice and altruism, the emergent concept of citizenship denoted a desire of liberty as much as it expressed a commitment to civic duty. This doubleness is apparent when Drake suggests to Althea that she could establish a sewing co-operative:

I think you have found something for me that I might venture to undertake

⁶⁵ William Shakespeare, 'Othello', *The Complete Shakespeare* (Boston and New York: Books Inc., 1944), pp. 1113-1150 (p. 1139).

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Kate Flint, 'The “Hour of Pink Twilight: Lesbian Poetics and Queer Encounters on the *Fin-de-siècle* Street', *Victorian Studies*, 51.4 (2009), 687-712 (p. 701).

⁶⁸ Meller, p. 14.

[...]. How clever of you to have hit upon my one gift! It has lain in a napkin so long – Faustina could not stand the sight of a needle – that I hope it has not grown rusty. (397)

Althea's excessively self-effacing reply is modelled on nineteenth-century conventions of female modesty, and her ambition to put into service for the benefit of the local community her 'one gift' recalls early models of philanthropy. Yet Althea's sincerity is undercut by her sentimental exaggeration, and the reader is asked to question whether her 'one gift' may not be, like Desdemona, her 'invention'. For the proposed arrangement will grant Althea freedoms and an opportunity to 'prove her worth', to use Meller's term, while it also offers her the opportunity of civic engagement. Although Drake will be 'close at hand' and 'live at the men's settlement' (398), Althea is given independent working and living arrangements in the settlement. It is an important distinction: Althea's move to the Canning Town Women's Settlement works in the space of the narrative to correct transgressions of gender and sexuality introduced earlier in the text, but it does not do so without interrogating the conventions it purports to reestablish. It is not for Drake that Althea leaves Faustina; it is for the personal freedoms available through social work at the Women's Headquarters of the Canning Town Settlement.

III

Althea's ambivalent motive for her relocation to the Canning Town Settlement expresses the doubleness that exists as a critical subtext throughout the narrative. What is suggested in narrative action at the novel's conclusion is communicated more subtlety – but more consistently – in narrative form throughout the novel. Textual elisions and inarticulations in the novel's dialogue confuse meaning, and consequently, obscure each character's motivation. These instances also give material (or formal) presence to the ambivalence that characterises the textual meaning and narrative progress. It is significant that nearly all of these instances occur in conversations with Faustina. In this final section, I would like examine to the ways that Faustina is characterised as a

threat not only on account of her 'sexual inversion', which Murphy has duly examined, but also on account of her unsettled social status and indeterminate financial position.⁶⁹

While other considerations of *Dear Faustina* have called attention to these breaks and lacunae in the text, all have attributed them exclusively to the unspeakability of women's erotic desire. For instance, Murphy suggests that this 'improper' relationship is at one point 'conveyed through a gap in their conversation implying an attraction that cannot be wholly voiced under the constraints of Victorian sexual discourse'.⁷⁰ Similarly, Hagar refers to a later point at which the two women embrace and suggests that the 'pause of a comma' indicates 'unnarratable physical intimacy'.⁷¹ I do not wish to suggest that such vacancies are not indicative of such erotic or emotional intimacy. Rather, I want to establish that there are numerous examples of such pauses and elisions in the text – in addition to many other formal irregularities – which, considered collectively, establish a meaningful ambiguity around Faustina's past and present social position. The most apparent break with formal convention in *Dear Faustina*, and one that rather alarmingly remains unmentioned in scholarship, is its use of the present tense throughout the entirety of the novel. The use of active voice makes the novel's action feel progressive, even in those circumstances where a thought or an emotion remains inarticulate or unsaid. The effect is that the narrative is highly dramatized – or once again, melodramatic – and because this quality is sustained the narrative is urgent and uncomfortable in its expression. Much like the ambiguous quotation of *Othello* at the novel's end, the use of present tense encourages readers to anticipate or create meaning before any action has occurred and therefore relies on the reader's interpretation, just as it does in the case of textual pauses or elisions.⁷² One of the earliest occasions at which this occurs is

69 Murphy, pp. 62-64.

70 Ibid., p. 69.

71 Hagar, p. 467.

72 Patterns of omission and elision are also used to express social and political struggles in Virginia Woolf's *The Years* (1937; first published as a series of essays under the title 'The Pargiters' in 1932), which traces the history of the Pargiter family from the 1880s to the present day of the novel in the 1930s. For instance, when Eleanor Pargiter is asked by her family about her philanthropic project which they refer to facetiously as her 'Grove day' and her 'relations with "the poor"', she is unable to respond in complete sentences. Eventually the narrator acknowledges that Eleanor 'did not like talking about "the poor"'. See Virginia Woolf, *The Years* (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 10-11; pp. 24-25. I am grateful to Jane Jordan for bringing this aspect of Woolf's novel to my attention.

the moment when Faustina invites Althea to share her flat at More Mansions. Faustina falters and stammers while posing the question:

'I have been the means of robbing you of one home; may not I' – sinking her voice, which has quite an un-put on tremble in it '– mayn't I offer you another – a very different one in point of luxury – but as you have often told me, the essentials of life are what you care about – you do not mind the trappings?' (45)

While the 'tremble' can be accurately read as Faustina's hesitation in proposing to establish such an intimate domestic relationship with Althea, the language is also couched in hesitation around Faustina's social and financial position. In addition to the 'tremble' there is also the repetition and contraction of the expression 'may not I' to 'mayn't I' that indicates the informality of intimacy – but there is also the suggestion that this slip may indicate her want of gentility. In fact, Faustina's penchant for improper language provokes the narrator to define certain idiosyncratic terms of Althea's as 'Batesonian' (237).⁷³ The other unusual aspect of this extract is the narrator's acknowledgment that Faustina's tremble is 'un-put on' (45). With this claim the narrator aims to affirm Faustina's sincerity, yet the comment must also call her sincerity into question. The reader is therefore unable to read these intimations without also reading their opposite. Likewise, at the novel's conclusion Althea is given the satisfaction of believing Faustina to be duplicitous and dishonest, interested more in her own career than the condition of the people whom she purports to help. In looking more closely at the ways that the novel's formal qualities point to the ambiguity of Faustina's past, it becomes clear that her ambition and self-regard are motivated by her own relative poverty. While Faustina is thought false by other characters and presumed to exploit upper-class women for their financial support or social power she does, as outlined earlier, demonstrate a 'commitment to the working classes' (46) by way of self-interest. When Faustina first proposes cohabitation, Althea hesitantly asks if she is to live with Faustina in the 'slums at Notting Hill' (45).

⁷³ The term is used when Althea begins to use colloquial language: 'The phrase is Batesonian. A year ago Althea would never have thought of alluding to a footman as a "lackey"' (237).

Faustina anxiously explains: 'That was merely a phase through which I happened to be passing. I had to live there for a while, because – because – in fact, I was getting up the subject of the Housing of the working classes' (46). Once again Faustina's hesitancy, the repetition of 'because – because' and the interval provided by 'in fact' suggests that something is unsaid or only half-articulate – and in this case it is not fuelled by romantic intimacy but by the question of social position. Faustina may well be investigating the subject of housing for the working classes for the purposes of earning a livelihood by way of journalism, but the method by which she expresses this suggests she may be compelled to live in such 'slums' for reasons otherwise.

It is not only Faustina who hedges around explaining her own past and financial circumstances. Drake, on the occasion of first introducing himself to Althea, refrains from elucidating any aspect of Faustina's present or past. Drake rather awkwardly explains that 'Miss Bateson is the daughter of – of one of [his] family's nearest neighbours' (111) in Devonshire. Yet Althea first feels that he is 'too much of a gentleman to be an intimate friend of Faustina's' (111). Once again, Faustina's identity remains indefinite. The reader can only assume that Drake refrains from stating the situation outright owing to obligations of propriety, just as Althea refuses to entertain even mental impressions of Faustina's poverty on account of their 'unworthiness' (111). The conversation continues in a similarly self-conscious manner when Althea refers to Faustina's family:

'They are, I believe, not — not at all worthy of her?'

'Has she told you so?'

'No-o — oh no, certainly not. She would not condescend to say anything in detraction of them beyond — beyond — '

He waits, politely expectant, but not helping her to a word, as he might so easily do. She has to set off upon a remodelled sentence:

'I gathered it from the fact of her having had to leave home through her faithfulness to her convictions. If the species of persecution to which she was exposed — '

'Persecution!'

'Yes, persecution' — firmly.

He looks upon the floor, and once again she has reason to suspect that he is struggling with a laugh. (111-2)

The cryptic exchange is one of several that are guarded by hesitancy and which reveal more by omission than they do by inclusion. For instance, the only information the reader is given is thrown into question by Drake's exclamation and his inability to stifle his laughter. The scene is also peculiar in that it makes use of realism in dialogue in its attempt to represent improvisational and unpolished conversation, but by so doing the conversation approaches the highly dramatized effects of melodrama. The scene, without providing the reader with any further information about Faustina's family, casts aspersions on her character by way of elision and omission.

At this stage, Althea is still of the opinion that Faustina's social position is one of elective and 'honourable poverty' (157). Her opinion shifts after she finds Faustina unwilling to abandon work for a newspaper of 'objectionable principles' (157) on account of desperately needing the money, but equally when her jealousy is incited by Faustina's increasingly close relationship with Cressida Delafield. After the young woman's mother, Lady Lanington, appeals to Althea for help in saving her daughter from taking up rescue work it is Drake to whom she turns for help. Only at this stage is the reader given a clearer understanding of the complexity and seriousness of Faustina's economic position. And although it is one that should at least explain, if not excuse, her ambitious and sometimes ruthless behaviour, she is unfairly and uniformly maligned by other characters for the duration of the novel. Drake visits Faustina at More Mansions with 'one brief request — one demand to make' (350), which is that she discontinue her relationship with Cressida. Although he first reminds her of the consequences of interfering with a family of such powerful social standing, he soon threatens her with terminating their own acquaintance. Faustina realises that Drake refers to not only his friendship, but 'the help – the pecuniary help which [he has] given [her] all these years' (355). She continues:

'[It was] given by you and accepted by me without humiliation because we were both in the same boat.'

'We were never in the same boat.'

'We were in the same boat inasmuch as [sic] we had both been turned out of doors for our fidelity to our opinions.'

'Was it for *your opinions* you were turned out of doors?' [emphasis original] (355)

In repeating the phrase 'same boat' instead of naming explicitly the situation or condition to which they refer, the dialogue continues to imbricate concerns about the way that, as Murphy describes, both Faustina's 'character and her social agenda [are] set against the rules of nature'.⁷⁴ If the reader has been led to believe that Faustina's romantic interest in Althea was only an exploitative ploy in service of her professional ambitions, it is here implied that such ambitions were but a necessity for certain unacceptable romantic desires. This becomes clearer when Drake charges Faustina with sexual impropriety, and suggests that Faustina's convictions lead her to 'extravagant and immoral actions' (356). Yet this charge is again thrown into obscurity when he soon after refers to her objectionable 'puff and push and vulgar striving for notoriety', lamenting her lost 'selfless love, [...] righteous anger, [...] [and] noble faith' (357). Although Faustina is not given the opportunity for explanation or defence, it is clear that her 'striving for notoriety' was only for the purpose of relinquishing Drake's financial support and resultant control. It is easy for the reader to fall into the trap of presuming Faustina to be the narrative villain on account of the ways her actions seem to fuse economic and sexual power, and indeed all previous critical work on this text assumes this to be the case. Yet to scratch the surface of each other character's motivations reveals the interrelatedness of these forms of social authority. Like Faustina, both Althea and Drake act out of self-interest. Althea's fascination with the Canning Town Women's Settlement develops only once she leaves More Mansions after a lover's quarrel during which she demands that Faustina 'choose between Cressida Delafield and [herself]' (302). Neither is narrative rescuer Drake, upon close inspection, entirely virtuous; for his demand that Cressida return to her family is in no small part motivated by his own romantic interest in Althea, and his desire that she may be indebted to him for the favour. Indeed, Faustina makes this very charge of him when he demands that she compose

⁷⁴ Murphy, p. 60.

a letter to Cressida Delafield – dictated by him – designed to cut the young woman loose. Faustina calmly proclaims:

You have interfered in a matter with which you have no smallest concern; you have stooped to be the tool of a girl as contemptible in character as puny in intellect; you have used a lever which no generous mind would have employed; and now, will you please tell me what I am to say? (358-9)

If it were the case that the novel were to end here at More Mansions, rather than at the Canning Town Settlement as it does two chapters hence, both contemporary and more recent critics may have examined more closely their assumption that only Faustina is 'corrupt and hypocritical'.⁷⁵ For this is a pivotal moment in the text and one of the only instances where irony is produced not by omission, repetition, or elision – but instead by the fact that – after this fully articulate and candid moment of expression – Faustina asks Drake to 'tell [her] what to say'. A reader might therefore interpret Faustina's immediate departure to America for the purposes of conducting a lecture tour not as enforced exile, but as a relocation that will allow her to speak plainly and on her own account.

Dear Faustina articulates the ways that new forms of housing were viewed as a threat to economic stability as much as sexual convention, but that this housing could also in turn provide the means by which to manage that threat. The novel's transpositional shifts between domestic situations at More Mansions and the Canning Town Settlement express the ways in which housing that was developed in response to these new economic concerns unearthed the complexities of sexuality and desire in the metropolis. Just as the novel's subtext works largely through elision and omission in order to question the actions and assumptions of its characters, *Dear Faustina* suggests that new architectural structures or domestic situations can only obscurely communicate their commitment to or capacity for reform. Yet *Dear Faustina* suggests examinations of narrative forms and social relationships might prove more instructive when their exclusions and inadequacies are

⁷⁵ Hagar, p. 462.

taken into consideration.

'For Goodness' Sake Don't Become Philanthropic':
Material Morality in L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895)

One year before Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896) made infamous the East End slum neighbourhood known as the Old Nichol, the district received treatment in a novel written by an author who was a less likely candidate for representations of vice, violence and abject poverty: the popular writer of girls' stories, L.T. Meade. *A Princess of the Gutter* (1895) follows the generic conventions of the romance novel in its narrative trajectory, but draws on modes of realism in both its discourse and subject. The novel traces the personal transformation of Joan Prinsep, a Girton graduate who is left a great fortune upon her uncle's death, but who is distressed when she discovers its source is the tenure of a series of slum properties concentrated in Shoreditch. Following the romance convention of the rescue plot, Joan is inspired to settle in the East End with the ambition of helping to ameliorate the lives and living conditions of the local population. In this sense, the novel is organised around her personal transformation – but also the material transformation of the people with whom she lives: Joan's benefaction to the district is a block of model dwellings, the 'Joan Mansions', which replaces the former slum properties. The novel's subject is a familiar one and, as Lynne Hapgood notes, is based on the slum fiction of the early eighties like Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) and George Gissing's *Workers in the Dawn* (1880).⁷⁶ Like these novels, *A Princess of the Gutter* is textured by its engagement with the conditions of urban poverty and is preoccupied by contemporaneous efforts for social justice. The novel's integration of romance and realism is not merely aesthetic; it is also political. In this section, I explore the ways that *A Princess of the Gutter* makes use of such generic conventions in order to engage in contemporary debates about the settlement movement and the degree to which religious philosophy

⁷⁶ Lynne Hapgood, 'Circe Among Cities: Images of London and the Language of Social Concern 1880-1900' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 1990), p. 224.

was necessary in order for this method of social action to be effective. More specifically, Meade's use of realism articulates an argument for the importance of material concerns in settlement work. These tropes of realism are, however, organised around the central structure of the novel's romance narrative, which conveys an equally weighted argument for the significance of metaphysical transcendence in effecting social change. In what follows, I first examine Meade's engagement with contemporary debates about the relationship between religion and philanthropy against the background of Mary Ward's *Robert Elsmere* (1888). I then consider the stages of the romance plot in *A Princess of the Gutter* and the ways that each is expressed by way of the novel's engagement with urban housing. I demonstrate the ways that the romance narrative is thereby put into the service of social and political concerns around urban poverty and social improvement schemes.

I

Although *A Princess of the Gutter* engages with social themes that were established a decade earlier in the pages of slum novels, it was certainly not the case that these subjects were exhausted by the century's end. The cheerless representations of the city's working classes and urban poverty in the novels of Besant and Gissing, as has been discussed, drew on contemporaneous investigative journalism into the living conditions of the urban poor by individuals like George Sims and William Booth.⁷⁷ The pervasiveness of the discourse established by such texts, coupled with the emergence and eventual ascendancy of social realism over the romantic mode in the final decades of the nineteenth century, meant that the grittier aspects of the urban environment and its inhabitants soon proliferated in the popular literary marketplace.⁷⁸ After reading George Gissing's *Demos* (1886) during a period of convalescence, for instance, the novelist Mary Ward decided to write a novel of

⁷⁷ For a more thorough consideration of the relationship between investigative journalism and slum fiction, see Chapter 2.2 of the present work.

⁷⁸ For an examination of the ways that realism and romanticism were contending for aesthetic hegemony during the period see Mary Elizabeth Leighton, 'The Trilby Phenomenon and Late Victorian Culture' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Alberta, 2003), pp. 15-44.

equal social importance but which was decidedly less pessimistic in tone: *Marcella* (1894).⁷⁹ In this novel, which I discuss with particular reference to social liberalism in Chapter 2, Ward draws upon the long inheritance of the nineteenth-century social problem novel by authors such as Elizabeth Gaskell and George Eliot. As I have argued, Ward adapts this form in order to engage with political themes – like the emergence of socialism – and also to build upon the aesthetic developments of slum fiction and its representation of the urban poor. It is a novel that changes register, and according to Judith Wilt disappointingly so, from the sociopolitical to personal transposition and compromise.⁸⁰ Although Ward's earlier work *Robert Elsmere* is most often studied as a novel in the intellectual tradition on account of its examination of debates around nineteenth-century secularisation, the text is preoccupied with the ways that a new interpretation of Christianity can be achieved through social service.

Robert Elsmere follows the religious crisis of a young clergyman who denounces his orders after intellectual enquiry in the manner of German Higher Criticism makes him question the authority of the bible. Although Elsmere abandons religious doctrine, he puts into practice the philosophies of constructive liberalism and in an effort to unite the 'perpetual divorce between thought and action' establishes the Elgood Street Settlement and the New Brotherhood of Christ in London's East End.⁸¹ The novel was famously one of the century's best-selling, and certainly the decade's most popular, inspiring countless reviews and responses including William Gladstone's censorious essay in *The Nineteenth Century*.⁸² *Robert Elsmere* also required unprecedented legal work around international copyright in order to prevent the sale of cheap pirated reprints – or bizarre unauthorised sequels such as *Robert Elsmere's Daughter* – in the United States.⁸³ In his

79 William S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphrey Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), p. 153.

80 Judith Wilt, *Behind Her Times: Transition in the Novels of Mary Augusta Ward* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p. 82. See Chapter 2.4 of the present work for a more detailed examination of Mary Ward's *Marcella*.

81 Mrs. Humphrey [Mary] Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1888), p. 415.

82 For a more thorough discussion of reviews of and responses to *Robert Elsmere*, see Peterson, pp. 159-184 and Appendix B.

83 Peterson, p. 167; pp. 176-80.

study of the novel, William S. Peterson explains that those who did not read the novel would have been made familiar with its author by way of the church, where it was 'abused from countless pulpits'.⁸⁴

Central to *Robert Elsmere* is the question of whether religious doctrine must be believed in order to be enacted. While I have suggested that *Robert Elsmere* is preoccupied with philosophical enquiry as well as social action, the latter is always in service to the former. In *Architecture and Social Reform in Late Victorian Britain*, Deborah Weiner explores how the novel's engagement with the New Theology established by T.H. Green and Benjamin Jowett – which advocated the performance of Christian duty through social service – was materially realised in the establishment of University Hall and later the Passmore Edwards Settlement (which would later become the Mary Ward Centre).⁸⁵ Yet, as Weiner notes, the novel offers very little detail about the settlement itself and exactly what kind of social work Elsmere undertakes.⁸⁶ When early reviewers suggested that the novel was wanting in realism, it is likely the novel's final third, which is set at the Elgood Street Settlement and in the city's East End, which prompted objections.⁸⁷ Although Ward believed this to be the 'finest part of her novel', Peterson argues that Elsmere's personality is 'flattened into an instrument of propaganda once he is no longer afflicted by scepticism'.⁸⁸ That the novel's concern with social action topples without its line of metaphysical enquiry suggests the text is only notionally concerned with the material conditions of urban poverty. Yet Ward's novel initiated important cultural debate about the relationship between thought and action, and metaphysical and material concerns. The existing scholarship that engages with Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* focuses on the novel's use of conventions established by late nineteenth-century slum fiction – and

⁸⁴ Peterson, p. 160.

⁸⁵ Deborah Weiner, *Architecture and Social Reform in Late Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 204-35. For a discussion of the relationship between the political and social philosophy as espoused in Ward's fiction and the foundation of the Passmore Edwards Settlement, see Chapter 2.4.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 208.

⁸⁷ Both Weiner (pp. 204-207; pp. 229-230) and Peterson (pp. 152-158) comment on the extent to which the novel – and in particular the establishment of the Elgood Street Settlement – represents Ward's personal experiences with and practical commitment to settlement work.

⁸⁸ Peterson, p. 152.

certainly the importance of such tropes in this novel cannot be overstated. Yet to examine only the novel's successful execution of realism, or to focus on the ways that as a story for young people its emphasis on romance occludes or confounds its project of social concern, is to neglect an important aspect of the novel. I want to suggest that *A Princess of the Gutter* undertakes a similar project to that of *Robert Elsmere*, albeit for a different audience, and that it is an intervention in concurrent debates about the relationship between religion and philanthropy.

Although Meade's work was characterised by contemporaries as sentimental for its adherence to the conventions of romance, Sally Mitchell points out that Meade wrote not only a phenomenal quantity – she published at least 250 novels – but also wrote across literary genres.⁸⁹ In addition to school stories, tales of aristocratic life, sensation novels, and books for the awards-market, Meade wrote tales of the supernatural and science fiction, and she also seems to have invented the subgenre of medical mystery.⁹⁰ Nor was Meade's engagement with topical issues limited to scientific developments: she wrote a number of novels concerned with women's social and political advancements. Given Meade's engagement with girls' fiction and the attendant moral impetus that was necessarily allotted to such texts, Koven's description of her as a 'pillar of respectability, a wife and mother, [and] a staunch Evangelical' seems plausible.⁹¹ However Meade self-identified as a 'consummate professional', was fiercely independent, and served on the committee of the Pioneer Club which debated social and political issues and to which Mona Caird and Sarah Grand also belonged.⁹² Between 1887 and 1893 Meade edited the magazine *Atalanta*, and transformed it into a significant resource for older girls and young women (approximately age 14 to 25) by featuring articles on women's history, schooling, women's colleges, as well as careers

89 Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England 1880-1915* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 11.

90 Mitchell suggests that Meade's 'Stories from the Diary of a Doctor', which ran in the *Strand* between 1893 and 1897, hinged on a plot that was driven by new scientific discoveries or 'bizarre medical information'. Early stories were collected and published in *Stories from the Diary of a Doctor* (1894). See Mitchell, p. 11.

91 Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 205.

92 Sally Mitchell, 'Meade, Elizabeth Thomasina (1844-1914)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press Online Edition, 2004).
<doi:10.1093/ref:odnb/52740> [accessed 15 October 2013]

advice and serious fiction.⁹³ Among the contributors to *Atalanta* were Evelyn Sharp, Margaret Oliphant, Amy Levy, Walter Besant – and Mary Ward, who in 1888 provided an article on Elizabeth Barrett Browning to the educational feature 'Scholarship and Reading'.⁹⁴ While it is therefore almost certainly the case that Meade and Ward were in communication the year that *Robert Elsmere* was published, I am less concerned with tracing the influence of this novel on *A Princess of the Gutter* than I am in examining the ways that it engages with those debates presented in the text. As Peterson observes, the philosophical and religious questions with which Ward engages in *Robert Elsmere* had been common currency among the intellectual elite for at least a decade, and for this reason many of Ward's contemporaries derided her work as somewhat prosaic, even if it was finely crafted.⁹⁵ As Gladstone's review makes clear, the novel interpreted these debates for consideration in a new genre and in so doing cultivated a new audience for what some saw as an age-old debate. In *A Princess of the Gutter*, Meade's technique is similar: she engages with the same 'spirit of the age' that Gladstone identifies in *Robert Elsmere*, and in so doing draws out questions about whether social action was dependent upon submission to religious orthodoxy. Rather than diluting such questions and flattening their intellectual complexity for the juvenile audience, Meade makes a unique intervention into these debates. She does so intellectually in her examination of the roles of materiality and metaphysical belief in social work, but also generically in her imbrication of romance and realism.

The narrative structure of *A Princess of the Gutter* mirrors the tripartite pattern found in *Robert Elsmere*: the novel begins in the pastoral world of Westmorland, which represents traditional commitment to faith; when Elsmere becomes Rector of Murewell in Surrey he is introduced to the squire whose library is furnished with the works of biblical criticism that lead to Elsmere's crisis of faith; finally, Elsmere moves to London where his shift in belief to the principles of the New

93 Mitchell, 'Meade, Elizabeth Thomasina (1844-1914)'.

94 Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor eds., *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Ghent: Academia Press, 2009), p. 26. See also Joanne Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain: the Critical Reception of Jane Austen, Charlotte Bronte, and George Eliot* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 143.

95 Peterson, p. 160.

Theology inspire his commitment to founding the settlement of the New Brotherhood in the city's East End. In *A Princess of the Gutter*, Joan Prinsep is unique among her family members, all of whom represent traditional religious commitment. However, their commitment differs from those who live in the Edenic paradise of the Valley of Westmorland in Ward's novel. While Joan's family is governed by religious convention, their convictions are superficial and their interests are baldly material. For instance, Joan is told of the ill health of her guardian and reminded of his considerable fortune in the same breath by her Aunt Fanny: 'Poor fellow, the doctor says there is no hope for him – a worldly man – yes, no doubt of that – but *very* rich'.⁹⁶ This initial stage of the novel also represents Joan as a character out of place: she is, like Jane Eyre, an orphan who must find her own way in the world on account of her guardians proving to be 'antagonistic to [her] at every point' (5). The use of first-person narration consolidates the reader's sense of Joan as an individual singular in her environment, just as it does in Bronte's text.⁹⁷ However in this novel no straightforward distinction between beneficence and malice exists, as might seem more fitting in a narrative framed by a child's perspective. Although Joan is often 'rubbed [...] the wrong way' by her aunt, she explains: '[N]ot that there was really anything objectionable about them – they were everyday sort of people. Aunt Fanny would not hurt a fly if she could help it, but in tastes, outlook, interests in life; in short, from every point of view, my relations and I were as the poles asunder' (5). Such constructions of conventional morality, or the beliefs and habits of these 'everyday sort of people', are a crucial part of the narrative's intervention into debates about religion and materiality. Joan's relations are not exactly immoral, but inconsistent in their moral strategy. Upon the death of Joan's wealthy benefactor, for instance, Aunt Fanny is scandalised when Joan refuses to dress in deep mourning, but owing to reasons of propriety – that it might be 'thought strange' (29) – rather than genuine grief. While on this occasion Joan is gently chided for her 'original and eccentric

96 L.T. Meade, *A Princess of the Gutter* (London: Wells Gardner, 1895), p. 5. All further references to this edition are given in parentheses after the quotation in the text.

97 There are further parallels between this novel and Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1847) particularly in style and structure, though less so in plot. A further examination of these parallels unfortunately exceeds the parameters of the present work.

behaviour', she realises that her aunt 'would have called her a heartless wretch a week ago; but perhaps the lawyer had given her some intimation of the wording of the will' (30). This 'obsequious' (30) behaviour soon makes clear to the reader that the position of guardian has been tended for the purpose of courting financial rewards as opposed to moral goodness, or a sense of duty to one's relations.

Joan does inherit a vast sum of money: in addition to an annual income of three thousand pounds, she also receives a property portfolio with a realisable capital of one hundred thousand pounds. Yet Joan receives this money together with an informal stipulation which serves as the crux of the narrative. Although Joan feels a greater degree of sympathy towards her benefactor than she does her guardians, and given the focalised narration so does the reader, it is revealed that the greater portion of this money has been generated through unethical practices. The properties that belonged to her uncle, located mostly in the East End but including one near Holborn, form slum districts, which her lawyer advises her are 'not a fit place' (55) for her to even visit. On his deathbed, Joan's benefactor does not explain his position as slumlord but does acknowledge that he has been 'an unfaithful steward' (19) and asks that Joan 'rectify [his] mistakes' (20). It is significant that, although Joan promises to honour her uncle's memory and recognises that she is 'bound by a promise [...] [to] a dying man' (27), there is no legal clause that stipulates access to the inheritance will be granted only if she acts charitably. This is an aspect that Sarah Wise overlooks in her otherwise compelling interpretation of the novel: if there were a 'codicil to [her uncle's] will [which] states she can only inherit if she spends time living among the poor', the novel's central concern would be inconsistent.⁹⁸ As a representative of a younger and apparently more socially conscious generation, Joan must make the *decision* to unite conventional morality with material concerns. Koven also misses the mark somewhat when he suggests that Joan moves to the East End simply because she is 'fascinated by the spectacle of urban poverty'.⁹⁹ It is crucial that Joan's

98 Sarah Wise, *The Blackest Streets: the Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (London: Vintage, 2009), p. 223.

99 Koven, p. 215.

decision is a sacrifice, for her guardian 'left [her] all this wealth unconditionally' and she is under no legal obligation to do anything other than 'make ducks and drakes with it' (40). The novel not only represents Joan's decision as a sacrifice, it also models her character and her humanitarian mission on the efforts of St. Joan of Arc. Elaine Showalter notes that 'Joan of Arc was a significant imaginative figure for Victorian feminists and especially for single women', as she belonged to a cause and represented 'the chastity, courage, and persecution of female militancy'.¹⁰⁰ While Joan's social mission in *A Princess of the Gutter* is not explicitly feminist, it is tied to feminist concerns such as the lives and experiences of the city's educated, single women. As stated, Meade was involved in feminist circles through her participation in the Pioneer Club and also wrote a number of novels concerned with 'emancipated women devoted to the cause of their sex'.¹⁰¹ Just as St. Joan of Arc's mission united spiritual and political concerns, Joan Prinsep's mission is represented as a moral duty – but one that has its basis in earthly matters. Joan does 'not wish to be a philanthropist or anything of that sort', but rather wishes to be 'good to those [she] care[s] for' (16). This is significant, as it reveals that Joan's understanding of philanthropy is something quite other than 'being good', and seems to be connected to her aversion to the abstract religion and false morality of the generation represented by her guardian and benefactor. Joan is not philanthropic, and neither is she religious:

I was not praying, but I was thinking with great intensity. I did not wish to sacrifice myself in any way. I was really not a bit good nor high minded. As I knelt there I was not praying, but I was looking at myself. It is horrid to look at oneself when one is essentially commonplace. [...] Is it worth keeping back anything so utterly commonplace? On the other hand, is it worth offering it up? – And to whom am I to offer it up? Not to God, for I don't know him; to a dead man, then. (28)

The passage makes clear that although Joan does make a sacrifice, she does not do so in the conventional sense of surrendering a possession or herself to a deity. Her promise is not to God, nor

¹⁰⁰ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 29.

¹⁰¹ Qtd. in Mitchell, p. 11. Mitchell explains that the phrase appears in publishers' advertisements to describe Meade's, novel *The Cleverest Woman in England* (1898). See Mitchell, p. 190, n13.

is it to the memory or the spirit of her uncle, but to the abstract and physical concept of a 'dead man'. Joan's repetition of the phrase 'I was not praying' suggests that although she examines her conscience, she does not do so for any purpose other than for serious deliberation about herself. Yet she is saved from conceit in her admission that she is utterly 'commonplace' and 'not a bit good nor high minded'. The narration here is in past tense – and together with comments such as 'in those days I was not at all religious' – indicates that Joan's mission will involve her own religious conversion. The question of Joan's religious commitment, and its implications for social work, I return to at the conclusion of this chapter. At this point I would like to examine how the concept of the social settlement is used in the novel to comment on the ways that conventional morality and religion can be reimagined and revived through work among the urban poor.

II

Like other novels of the period that focus on the movement from middle-class to working-class districts of London, *A Princess of the Gutter* establishes the conventions of middle-class domesticity in its opening chapters. In novels such as Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), which focus on 'slumming' and in so doing concentrate on the deplorable sanitary and moral conditions of working-class domesticity, this transition is used to sensationalise urban poverty. Other novels, such as Mary Ward's *Marcella* (1894), also make use of this contrast between different domestic environments but do so in an effort to establish an acceptable moral standard and thereby validate the protagonist's project of domestic reform in poorer districts. This is partly the case in *A Princess of the Gutter*, as Joan's initial efforts after moving to the East End are similar to Marcella's: Joan decides to whitewash the walls, hang new curtains, and convert the house into a space from which she may carry out her mission. Yet it would be reductive to assume this novel only recycles the conventions of earlier novels, for the middle-class homes in which Joan's family live are defined by the same duplicitousness that characterises her relations themselves. In the case of her guardian, Uncle Ralph, this perfidiousness is straight-forward: the

man lives alone in a 'handsome, gloomy house in Bayswater' (5) that is 'in the most apple pie order' where he has 'a valet to dress him, and a secretary to write for him, and somebody else [...] to read aloud to him; and he had servants to wait primarily on himself, and secondarily on each other' (6). The irony here, as the reader discovers shortly after this description, is that this man, whom Joan describes as 'one of the laziest people that ever lived' (5), is economically sustained by a social group often characterised themselves as unproductive and undeserving.¹⁰² When Joan confronts her lawyer about the life and character of her late uncle, she is told that he was what might be called 'a silent Christian':

I have no doubt he did a great deal of good, but he was not one of those who proclaim their deeds of charity in the marketplace. Scripture is against that mode of procedure. Mr. Prinsep, to quote from the Bible, never told his right hand what his left hand did. [...] [H]e belonged to the excellent of the earth. (41-2)

Here the irony continues, for the passage in Matthew 6:3 to which the lawyer refers recommends quiet charity, or 'giving in secret', and denounces hypocrisy.¹⁰³ The lawyer's wilful misinterpretation of this passage, together with his effort to disguise Mr. Prinsep's self-interest, only extends the dishonesty that is the dead man's legacy.

The house where Joan lives with her guardians, the Bannermans, upon her return from Girton materialises her uncle's dishonesty and her aunt's covetousness. The Bannermans reside in Bloomsbury: a neighbourhood deemed 'unsuitable for upper-middle-class families' by the middle of the nineteenth century on account of its bohemian character and bachelor culture.¹⁰⁴ As I explore in

102 The parallel between the exploitative practices of the property-owning classes and urban 'slumlords' is also the central irony of Bernard Shaw's first play *Widower's Houses* (1892). See 'Widower's Houses', *The Complete Plays of Bernard Shaw* (London: Odhams, 1934), pp. 1-27.

103 The passage from the 1611 King James version reads: 'Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do, in the Synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have the glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth: That thine alms be in secret: And thy father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly'. Matthew 6: 2-4, in *The Parallel New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: Being the Authorised Version Set Forth in 1611 Arranged in Parallel Columns with the Revised Version of 1881* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1882), p. 10.

104 Matthew Ingleby, 'Bulwer-Lytton, Braddon and the Bachelorization of Legal Bloomsbury', *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, 8.2 (2012), n.p. <<http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue82/ingleby.htm>>. [accessed 15 May 2013]

detail in Chapter 2, Bloomsbury was also at this time the site of numerous development projects which altered the physical landscape and destabilised communities. The Bannermans' home in Gordon Square is a source of social embarrassment to Aunt Fanny and her daughters, Francesca and Anne, who long for a home in South Kensington. However according to Joan, the house was 'large, well-built and comfortable' and even though her third-floor bedroom was 'by no means a pretty room', it was one to which Joan 'liked to retire' (2). Joan's satisfaction with the house, at this early stage in the novel, colours her as pragmatic and serious-minded: qualities expected from a recent graduate of Girton. Joan's pragmatism comes into effect when she proposes to help finance the family's move from Bloomsbury to South Kensington, and discovers her uncle's refusal to move west is not motivated by 'obstinacy' (64) but rather because he is committed to financing the education of his deceased brother's children. Joan's uncle uses his brother Tom's death as the basis of a cautionary tale about work among the poor: the curate of an 'overworked parish in Manchester', Tom contracted typhoid while visiting the sick and 'no one thanked him for throwing away his life' (101). Joan's uncle understands her ambition to ameliorate the living conditions of the poor as one of personal and financial sacrifice but, crucially, does not antagonise her further and instead remarks that her project is 'beyond [his] wits' (101). While *Robert Elsemere* opens in the pastoral realm of tradition, *A Princess of the Gutter* begins in an urban environment where houses are traditional and characters are morally out of fashion. Joan's relations fail to unite their religious beliefs with any practical commitment. Coordinately, the houses in which her relations live are materially unethical: her benefactor's grand house at Dorset Gate was paid for by the suffering of the urban poor, and her guardian's Bloomsbury home testifies to her aunt's greed and her uncle's dishonesty. When Joan moves to the East End, where she establishes a settlement for working girls, and campaigns for the destruction of the buildings she owns in Jasper Court, she sets into action a new form of morality that has its basis in material concern. In what follows, I examine the ways that the settlement becomes Joan's method of access to the unfamiliar culture of the East End, and

allows her to reconceptualise a new form of domestic space that unites moral and material concerns. If the social aspirations of the New Brotherhood were not realised in the pages of *Robert Elsemere*, in *A Princess of the Gutter* a related project is accomplished at the conclusion of the novel with the construction of new housing for the working classes: the 'Joan Mansions'.

After Joan's visit to Jasper Court, one of the properties she inherits from her uncle, the deplorable conditions of life in those buildings inspire her to devote her energies to improving housing for the working classes, beginning with her own properties. In this section of the text, Meade draws on the language and imagery of slum fiction and also, as Koven acknowledges, nonfictional narratives written by reformers like Beatrice Potter (Webb), particularly in the depiction of the ways that 'Joan's conscience is pricked by her sensory impressions of the slums'.¹⁰⁵ While accompanying the rent collector of Jasper Court on one occasion, Joan describes the slum properties: '[N]ot a room in that wretched court was fit for habitation. The broken windows were stopped up with rags, the floors were grimy with dirt, and vermin swarmed all over the horrible place' (73). Although Meade makes use of the language of realism, which colours both slum fiction and the nonfiction accounts to which Koven refers, Meade avoids the morbid fixation on insanitary conditions and the sensationalism that it could often produce. Absent are, for instance, George Gissing's rococo descriptions of the 'weltering mass of human weariness, of bestiality, of unmerited dolour, of hopeless hope, of crushed surrender' found in these slum districts.¹⁰⁶ Even when an old woman expires on a dirty pile of rags during Joan's visit to Jasper Court – all the while still being harassed for the rent by the collector – Meade substitutes sensationalism for sentimentalism: Joan stays with the woman who believes Joan must be sent 'straight from heaven' (71) and ensures that after the old woman's death she is 'treated with respect' (72). As Koven explains, Meade criticised contemporaneous 'social realist novels', which in the process of reading 'could become a form of slumming, one every bit as capable of infecting the reader in the privacy of her own home as a

¹⁰⁵ Koven, p. 216.

¹⁰⁶ George Gissing, *The Nether World* (Brighton: Harvester, 1974), p. 274.

descent into the actual filth of a slum tenement'.¹⁰⁷ However it is important to recognise that Meade *uses* the conventions of 'social realist' novels, at the same time as she might denounce other more prurient aspects of these works as immoral. It may be more accurate to suggest that in this novel Meade uses social realist conventions to reposition the slum novel which, like Julia Frankau, she does for the purpose of critiquing sensationalism and reinvigorating the subject with renewed moral concern.¹⁰⁸ This visit to the slum district of Jasper Court does not only communicate the abject living conditions of the urban poor, descriptions of which even young readers would have been familiar with by the end of the century, it is also a scene that justifies Joan's reform mission. Furthermore, the domestic space of Jasper Court conveys the complexity of religious belief and commitment in a slum district. When Joan emerges from one of the buildings in the court she is stopped by the inhabitants who demand that she improve their living conditions. One resident, 'Mad Bess', pipes up: 'I tell yer there ain't no GOD in the matter. It is hell this is. Don't talk to me of any o' your 'ells in the future. We're in hell 'ere, and so I sed to Salvation Army Captain George last Sunday. Why, we're in it, I sez. Don't you talk of no other hell' (74). Like King Lear who better perceives the world when mad and blind, here 'Mad Bess' offers a remarkably lucid argument about materialism: what effect could 'any [description of metaphysical] 'ells in the future' have on individuals who were materially already there?

While it is the visit to Jasper Court that encourages Joan to involve herself in ameliorating working-class housing, it is a letter from, and subsequent interview with, Father Ranald Moore of All Souls Vicarage in Shoreditch that convinces Joan that the best course of action is for her to move to Frank Street, Shoreditch. The representation of settlements in this text differs from the university settlements referred to in the previous section, but the 'men's club' that is run by Ranald Moore and the corresponding 'women's club' which Joan establishes are similar in purpose and method. The diversity of settlement work represented in the text is important, for the novel sets out

¹⁰⁷ Koven, p. 216.

¹⁰⁸ For an examination of Julia Frankau's satire of slum fiction, see Chapter 2.2 of the present work.

to consider to what extent social work must be guided by religious doctrine in order to be effective. Joan's women's club treads an important middle ground between the religiously based men's club established by Father Moore and the conventional university settlement, 'Balliol House' and its affiliated women's organisation, 'St. Agnes Settlement', both of which combine social work with spiritual belief. Although John Wilson Foster suggests that the representation of Balliol House in the novel is associated with a settlement of the same name in Belfast, it seems more likely that the settlement is based either on Oxford House or Toynbee Hall.¹⁰⁹ Both Arnold Toynbee, after whom the latter settlement was named following his untimely death at the age of thirty, and T.H. Green taught at Balliol College at Oxford, and so too was it 'the Oxford college most directly involved in Toynbee activities'.¹¹⁰ Balliol House was one of two residential halls at the Toynbee Hall, the other being Wadham House, both of which were established between 1887 and 1888 (although Balliol House was officially opened in 1891).¹¹¹ However, the settlement's location in Bethnal Green suggests it may also be modelled on Oxford House, which (established in 1884) was one of the earliest settlements and which was affiliated with the Church of England.¹¹² While the primary objective of Balliol House in *A Princess of the Gutter* is to bring 'the university life of Oxford with its intellectual refinements into the midst of the men and women in the East End' (221), this work is understood in the manner of the New Theology: belief cultivated through practice. Although Father Moore's men's club is an important place of congregation for the neighbourhood, it is Balliol House, Joan acknowledges, that was doing 'exhaustive and splendid work in East London' (221). Joan describes the work of 'brave men' (117) of Balliol House thus:

From this centre radiated a religious, social, and educational life which was having day by day a really permanent effect amongst the poor of that part of

109 John Foster Wilson, *Irish Novels 1890-1940: New Beginnings in Culture and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 80.

110 Asa Briggs and Anne MacCartney eds., *Toynbee Hall: The First Hundred Years* (Routledge: London, 1984), p. 30. Koven notes that it was under the influence of Benjamin Jowett that 'the best and brightest' students were sent to Toynbee Hall. See Koven, p. 254.

111 Briggs and MacCartney, p. 30.

112 Scotland, p. 17. In Meade's novel, Balliol House is characterised as a religious institution but is not explicitly given a particular Christian denomination.

London. Balliol House had been established in Bethnal Green in order that Oxford men might take part in the social and the religious work of the Church in East London, that they might try to effect the mental culture as well as spiritual teaching, and might themselves offer an example of a simple religious life. (117)

The settlement is represented as not just as a spiritual or educational force, but a spatial phenomenon: a 'centre' from which radiated a diversity of influences. In this central role, and its 'day to day [...] permanenc[e]', the settlement is defined as an institution where work is grounded in materiality. While Father Moore, having lived in the district 'a long time' (87), is portrayed as a figure whose work in the East End has been invaluable, his proselytizing and his proposal of mass emigration cannot address the city's intellectual poverty. In fact his proposal of strategic emigration for 'the right persons' (87) purports to do precisely the opposite of settlement in its aspiration of dispersal and displacement.

Both Father Moore and his men's club, and Balliol House and St. Agnes Settlement, influence the development of Joan's women's club and her own convictions in view of social work. It is Father Moore's personal magnetism, with his 'dark eyes that seemed to glow with a sort of inward fire' and his face 'full of energy' (86) that first persuades Joan to commit herself to settling in the East End. While Wise interprets this exchange as romantic, and suggests that Father Moore is cast in 'Mr Rochester mode', there is little else in the narrative to indicate that their relationship is romantic.¹¹³ During this initial exchange Joan comments that his 'features were somewhat homely' (86), and despite the narrative's reliance on certain conventions of the romance plot no such relationship between the two characters develops. Instead, Father Moore becomes a spiritual guide for Joan, one whose capacities for leadership – she identifies him as a 'captain in charge of a forlorn hope' (87) – and socially progressive notion of religion influence Joan's belief and practice. Father Moore's magnetism also has a grounding in historical truth, for as Wise, Koven and Hapgood all point out with varying degrees of conviction, he seems to be modelled on Arthur Osborne Jay and,

¹¹³ Wise, p. 223.

as stated, the neighbourhood near Frank Street in Shoreditch based on his parish in the Old Nichol.¹¹⁴ A contemporary article identifies the 'well-known parish in Shoreditch', and suggests that 'no one who knows that part of London will have any difficulty in "placing" either Father Moore or the building which comprises his church on an upper floor, his boxing club for men, and his own two rooms up a spiral iron staircase, leading to a large hall devoted to his people'.¹¹⁵ Joan adopts Father Moore's dedication to, and influence among his parish; she achieves this by first opening her own flat to young women in the neighbourhood in much the same way Father Moore shares his living space with 'his people'. Upon the recommendation of Father Moore, Joan takes the upper floors of a building in Frank Street which she describes as 'the reverse of inviting' (103). However with the help of a local man, Joan has the six layers of wallpaper scraped off, the holes filled to guard against '*the plague of the east end* [italics in original]' (104), the floors washed with turpentine, and the woodwork treated by the mysterious means of 'a certain sanitary process' (105). This regime, together with some basic redecorating, renders the space habitable. It also allows Joan to establish a centre from which to permanently influence the residents of the East End. After her renovations, Joan finds she has

eight rooms in all. Two sitting rooms facing the street, and a bedroom a piece for [her]self and [her housekeeper] Mrs. Keys at the back. A large front attic was to be used as a class room [...]; the other converted to a kitchen, with a stove and all the necessary appliances. The two back attics were furnished very simply as bedrooms. (105)

While the space is smaller than Father Moore's buildings at All Souls Vicarage, and Joan recognises her work is 'but a drop in the ocean' (115), Joan's tenure of this flat enables her to invite two young women to her rooms where she is able to win their interest and affection. This is crucial, as one turns out to be a character of considerable influence in the neighbourhood, the titular Princess of the

114 Wise, pp. 221-225; Koven, p. 217; Hapgood, pp. 224-225.

115 C. Fortescue Yonge, 'The English Clergy in Fiction', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1897, pp. 40-50 (p. 42).

Gutter, Martha Mace.¹¹⁶ Once Martha is clear that Joan is not out to 'do the religious dodge' (121), she and her companion Lucy establish an intimate friendship with Joan. This relationship proves formative in Joan's ambition to organise a women's club, for it is Martha and Lucy who encourage the neighbourhood's other residents to attend its functions.

Although university settlements offered affiliates residence in the settlement buildings, and in so doing established a new method of arranging and inhabiting domestic space, in this novel Joan's living quarters remain separate from the social space of her women's club. Joan's settlement programme also differs from that of Father Moore, who lives in rooms above his boxing club. The novel adheres to convention insofar as it represents Joan's efforts among the working classes as more efficacious on account of her having established her *own* home – and thereby domestic authority – in the East End. In this sense, the novel highlights the symbolic value of settlement in the narrative; it is not only for practical reasons that Joan decides to live in the vicinity in which she works, but the organisation of her own domestic space grants her allegorical and transformative power among the other residents of the neighbourhood. The transformation of her own space, that is, permits Joan to perform a similar task for the district at large. Joan's practice of settlement reveals a middle ground. Her rooms above the carpenter's shop are, by her family's standards, most unconventional; yet the space adheres to more domestic conventions than does the communal space of the residences at St. Agnes Settlement. Joan is, for instance, the master of her own domain and consolidates this by way of performing the duties of hostess when she invites Martha and Lucy for tea. Rather than jeopardise her authority by transforming her own home into public space – which she risks at one point by having 'twenty girls in [her] attic' (138) – Joan finances the construction of a purpose-built assembly hall in which to run the 'girls' club' (134).¹¹⁷ Establishing the meeting space outside her home also allows Joan to obviate the difficulty of merging domestic and civic

116 Meade notes in the novel's preface that 'Martha Mace, "the Princess", is sketched from a living original' (Meade, preface).

117 That the club is referred to as a 'girls' club' rather than a 'women's club' is consistent with the class-inflected language used during the period. See also p. 99, n15 of the present work.

styles of architecture, one of the challenges encountered by architect Elijah Hoole when proposing designs for Toynbee Hall. Unlike the later designs by Dunbar Smith and Brewer for the Passmore Edwards Settlement (Figure 5), which reconceptualised the relationship between living space and working space, Hoole's design for Toynbee Hall relied on the collegiate tradition for conceiving of the ways that one building might unite both purposes. The building, which has since been considerably modified, was originally structured around a narrow central courtyard, which drew influence from the collegiate quadrangle. The ground floor of the building was dominated by a large meeting hall and dining room, above which were rooms for residential workers on the upper storey. Although the settlement at Toynbee Hall had been motivated by social and political principles that gained new and important currency at the end of the nineteenth century, the building's design did not succeed in articulating an architectural language for this new ideological framework. In addition to the collegiate model, Deborah Weiner explains that Hoole's design relies on the architectural vocabulary of an 'Old English' or Neo-Tudor style that was 'self-consciously paternalistic', and which 'tallied with the movement's nostalgic view of history'.¹¹⁸ Although Weiner makes an important point about the ways that the building's design seemed to some people as regressive in style as it was progressive in action, it is insufficient to dismiss the settlement's motivations as simply recuperative; for those individuals involved did aspire to generate 'new thoughts and new experiences, with new powers and new conceptions of life's uses' by way of what Henrietta Barnett describes as 'practicable socialism'.¹¹⁹ What the case of Toynbee Hall makes clear is that the new social purposes for which these buildings were to be used required substantial experimentation with conventional forms. Toynbee Hall's peculiar incongruity between purpose and design gives evidence to ways that social and domestic practices were beginning to shift in ways that were not always coherent.

While waiting for the completion of her new hall, Joan rents the basement of a shoe

¹¹⁸ Weiner, p. 168.

¹¹⁹ Canon S.A. Barnett and Mrs. S.A. [Henrietta] Barnett, *Practicable Socialism* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1915), p. 56.

warehouse on 'Pink Street' that receives 'the same sort of transformation scene which [Joan's] lodgings had been subjected to' (145). Once again, the narrative draws on the conventions of realism in its representation of material detail – but also emphasises the building's modern design:

The walls, floor, ceiling, were all thoroughly cleansed; then the ceiling was whitewashed, the walls papered with a stout washing paper, which was varnished, and the floor covered with thick kamptulicon. Venetian blinds were hung at the windows, and further curtains were added to keep out the cold. (145)

These design efforts are more in the direction of sanitation than they are aesthetics. Joan's emphasis on modern materials like washing paper (waterproof wallpaper that can endure regular cleaning) and kamptulicon (a composite of rubber and cork that is a predecessor of linoleum) indicates that she is not under stress to reproduce a scaled-up version of a middle-class drawing room in the midst of the East End. Even her choice of venetian blinds, often used in commercial spaces in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to regulate light and air (the most famous example being the Empire State Building in New York City) are indications of her progressivism.¹²⁰ Like the newly-invented, composite materials used to give shape to the temporary space for the girls' club, Joan's efforts contribute to the development of a new religious practice that is grounded in civic and material concerns. However Joan's engagement with materiality is not reduced only to practicality. As at Toynbee Hall where members sought to reform by way of 'communal aesthetic revelation', as Diana Maltz notes, Joan sources 'about a dozen [...] good, attractive prints and engravings, cheaply framed' for she 'wanted to train [her] girls to like good things from the first' (145).¹²¹ Joan's 'missionary aestheticism', to use Maltz's term, succeeds precisely because her efforts are grounded in practical material concerns. The renovated basement of the shoe factory is both an example of and symbol for this material engagement, in a way the historicist design of Toynbee Hall could not

¹²⁰ John Tauranac, *The Empire State Building: The Making of a Landmark* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 314.

¹²¹ Diana Maltz, *British Aestheticism and the Urban Working Classes, 1870-1900: Beauty for the People* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 1.

be. The girls' club is not only transformative for those who attend and duly pay their membership fee of a penny a week, but also for Joan. At the club's opening Joan recognises that in living and working in the East End it was her ambition to 'indoctrinate [the club members] with something of [Father Moore's] spirit' (149). This 'spirit' becomes Joan's working model, and one which distinguishes her from the members of the St. Agnes settlement, who are always on hand to help out at the girls' club but who are afforded none of the moral conviction or personal magnetism of Father Moore. The girls' club becomes, quite simply, a physical manifestation of what Joan later defines as the 'universal brotherhood' (163). The term is very close both in name and in idea to the 'New Brotherhood' in *Robert Elsmere*, which refers to the physical meeting place of Elsmere's disciples but also to a differently conceived Christianity. Both novels posit the advent of reinvigorated Christianity where conventional morality is redeemed through a new commitment to social service and, correspondingly, the material effects of this service inspire a return to traditional belief systems. On the opening evening of the girls' club Joan confesses to the reader: 'At this time in my life I did not consider myself at all religious, but I knew enough to be certain that only religion could civilise such a neighbourhood as I had found myself in' (149). The narrative shift to past voice in this instance, Joan 'did not' consider herself religious 'at [that] time in [her] life', implies that this is a position that has since been reevaluated. Once materiality and morality have been united by the girls' club, Joan regains religious conviction. The correlation between the novel's discourse of spatial reformation and the cultural rehabilitation that settlement work sought to achieve has been central to examinations of middle-class social work among the urban poor.¹²² While such discourse is operative in *A Princess of the Gutter*, there is a spiritual transformation that occurs concurrently – one which takes the basic form of the conversion narrative. For the remainder

122 Koven comments on the relationship between the 'sanitary' and the 'social' throughout *Slumming*, however Chapter One, 'Workhouse Nights' (pp. 25-87), is especially useful in this consideration. See also Deborah Epstein Nord, "'Vitiated Air': The Polluted City and Female Sexuality in *Bleak House* and *Dombey and Son*", in *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 81-114; Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth-Century London* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 150-160; and Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1966; Republished 2002).

of this section, I examine the ways that Joan's conversion is represented as a form of apotheosis. I suggest that Joan's material intervention, that is the block of model dwellings she commissions and sees through to completion, allows the narrative to represent her as a progressively disembodied figure whose moral influence will endure after she ceases to live physically in the East End.

III

As one might expect of a novel written for a juvenile audience, *A Princess of the Gutter* tactically avoids the more contentious aspects of nineteenth-century doubt that novels like *Robert Elsmere* or George Eliot's *Romola* (1862-3) grapple with more closely. The specific terms of Joan's personal faith are not made explicit in the novel, and the reader is encouraged to sympathise with her conviction that conventional religious belief was most often not executed in practice. However Joan's religious commitment comes into focus over the course of the narrative, as her spiritual belief is reinvigorated through her dedication to social work. At its conclusion, much like *Robert Elsmere*, the implication is that a commitment to a 'universal brotherhood' that grounds metaphysical belief in material practice has the capacity to derail the emergence of religious unbelief and its political and social implications. Joan's conversion is therefore not one that maps the process of doubt to belief, but instead one that can be interpreted – like St. Joan of Arc – as the evolution from heretic to saint, where heretic is used in its standard definition of a belief at odds with conventional practice. When Joan first meets Father Moore and agrees to settle and work in the East End, she explains:

Now I must come to another point [...]. I am not at all in the ordinary sense religious. The religious people I have met in the course of my life have not pleased me. I suppose there is not a man or woman living who would not believe in the real thing; but in the sort of life I live one rubs up so often against the sham, and the sham thing has put me off religion. That being the case, I don't know how I am meant to appeal to my Maker in the matter. (89)

Joan's heresy is represented in a way that makes her more morally resolute than those people whom

she denounces as Christians. Joan's 'honest doubt', to use Tennyson's phrase, is itself an act of piety.¹²³ While she is not religious in the 'ordinary sense' she avows her belief in 'the real thing', any further definition of which the novel purposely leaves ambiguous. Those people whom she has 'rubbed up against' and whom she considers self-serving and hypocritical are characters who the reader is familiar with and, consequently, is willing to indict in the same manner as Joan. It is clear that part of Joan's scepticism is attributed to her university education, yet this is a quality the novel paints favourably, which is perhaps unsurprising given Meade's engagement with the importance of women's tertiary education both in her novels and in *Atalanta*.¹²⁴ Joan's education at Girton allows her to experience the 'practical knowledge of life' that is denied to 'girls of nineteen and twenty [who] are often married' (15), but it also endows her with the empiricist philosophy that results in her heresy. For instance, Joan conceives of her uncle's death only as his conversion from 'a living, breathing man in a body, [to] a mere senseless piece of cold flesh' (22). Yet Joan's sincere skepticism is precisely the quality that enables her conversion into, first, a person engaged with religion through practice or 'good works', and later, into a symbolic saint.

Joan adopts aspects of conventional religious practice as the narrative unfolds. When she confronts the 'burden [she] was to carry' in attempting to improve the properties at Frank Street and Jasper Court, the enormity of her task causes her to fall on her knees and 'attempt to pray' – although she confesses to the reader: 'It is a literal fact that I had never really prayed before' (93). It is this scene that serves as the tipping-point of Joan's conversion and eventual apotheosis, and thereafter the novel – using both language and image – thrusts her into a position not unlike that of St. Joan who acquired fame and a devoted following after her victories during the Hundred Years War. For instance, Joan's Uncle Bannerman understands sacrifice only in terms of foolishness and vanity, and warns her not to 'make [herself] too much of a martyr' (108). Father Moore, somewhat predictably, imagines that Joan may one day 'wear the martyr's palm' (90) as a mark of spiritual

123 Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam* (London: Edward Moxon, 1851), p. 143.

124 Meade's novel *A Sweet Girl Graduate* (London: Cassell & Co., 1891) became representative of girls' collegiate fiction in the late nineteenth century. See Mitchell, pp. 45-73.

accomplishment. It is appropriately Joan's disciples, Martha and Lucy, who make explicit this apotheosis by likening her to an 'angel'. This analogy first occurs when Martha and Lucy visit Joan not long after she has moved to the East End. When Joan is asked by the two women how she manages to do her hair so neatly, she confesses to the reader that although she 'did not feel inclined to take down [her] hair' she 'believed the sacrifice worthy of the occasion' (131). The image beguiles Martha and Lucy:

'Well, ef that ain't a picter,' [Martha] said.

'Why, you look jest like o' the hangels in Father Moore's church,' said Lucy; 'you know 'e 'ave painted winders in the church, and one on 'em 'as an angel painted on it, with 'air like yourn – my word, is it dyed, or is it nater'l?' (131)

Joan's decision to let her hair down in the company of these women is an effort to conduct herself modestly in their company, and this behaviour gives them the impression that she is neither 'proud nor 'aughty' (130). In this scene, Joan's physical body, specifically her hair, is given prominence for the purpose of characterising her as pragmatic and down-to-earth; yet this physical act is also a 'sacrifice', language which morally elevates Joan. This is the first of many instances where the affect of Joan's body is represented as morally effective. Joan comes to not merely symbolise, but embody her social project; her character personally unites metaphysical belief and material practice, which have been divorced until this point in the text, and which allows her to manifest a remodelled version of conventional Christian belief. For while Father Moore is also a character whose work among the urban poor is a guiding principle of his faith, he is also embedded in structures of religious convention that moderate his influence. Even he admits to Joan that were he to be present at the opening of her club, 'all of the members would ma[ke] for the door' (149).

Each additional textual reference that describes Joan as an angel draws a connection between her material efforts among the poor of the East End, and her physical presence. Martha confesses to Joan, for instance, 'it's wonderful; it's a sort of pleasure to lie 'ere and look at yer;

you're like that angel – wonderful like' (194). Martha then describes how the church angel's eyes 'draw [her] out of [her]self' (229), and as their friendship becomes increasingly intimate Joan finds Martha in church 'kneeling under the painted figure of the angel' (231). The metaphor of the church window is transparent: like the window, Joan's presence allows 'the soft coloured light [to steal] out on this hell on earth' (137). In her role as angel she becomes, like the painted pane of glass, an intercessory medium who morally illuminates those in her presence. The conversion narrative at this point in the novel is duplicated: as Joan discovers spirituality through social practice, Martha evinces religious belief by way of her commitment to Joan. On one occasion Martha remarks that she would not believe in God were it not that she could 'see Him through the angel' and 'see Him in [Joan] when [she] talk[s] weary kind' (232). Both Martha and Lucy learn from Joan's sacrifice, and in the second half of the novel when the narrative action picks up considerably, both women are presented with an opportunity to make related sacrifices. At the novel's climax, Joan is brutally attacked when returning home late at night after an evening at the girls' club and is only saved when a scream from a nearby murder interrupts her assailants. The scream turns out to have come from Lucy's scheming and unfaithful husband, Michael Lee, whom she murders in a fit of rage. This uncharacteristic action is Lucy's only display of agency or independence in the novel, and although the text condemns the murder as morally wrong, it is also an act that saves Joan's life. Martha, who recognises that Lucy would not survive prison on account of her constitutional weakness, confesses to the murder, is convicted and sentenced to death. Fortunately, Lucy's constitution gives way before Martha's execution and – with Joan's help – Martha is exonerated of the crime. It is Joan's role as what Koven refers to as a 'latter-day Elizabeth Fry', and her concerted efforts to have Martha's selflessness and sacrifice socially and legally recognised, that frame Joan's final apotheosis.

The text's emphasis on the affective importance of Joan's physical body in effecting social change produces the novel's erotic charge – or what Koven refers to as 'the homoerotics of

dirtiness'.¹²⁵ There is no doubt that, just as the dynamics of interdependent sacrifice between the three women in the novel are complex, so is the triangle of romantic friendship. In *The Blackest Streets*, Wise reads the form of friendship that exists between Martha and Lucy, which they proclaim is 'as good as bein married in some ways, an' with none o' the troubles' (127), as a historically accurate representation of mate-ship: an 'intense, one-on-one, non-sexual relationship between one rough gel [sic] and another', which Wise suggests is a social arrangement unique to the East End.¹²⁶ Koven somewhat side-steps this historical reading and instead makes an important argument for a more nuanced reading of the women's relationship as one that is not necessarily non-sexual, and one which seems to 'surpass the boundaries of romantic friendship'.¹²⁷ Curiously, however, Koven concentrates on the relationship between Joan and Martha but irons out power differentials between the two women in such a way that fails to acknowledge the complexity of this exchange. For instance, Koven suggests that the hallmark of homoerotic relationships between women in novels of this period is their reliance on constructing an 'emotional and physical distance' between characters; this, he believes, is 'absent' in *A Princess of the Gutter*.¹²⁸ In defending this proposition Koven refers to a 'frankly erotic' and 'passionate' kiss that occurs when Joan visits Martha in her prison cell; Koven wonders, 'what accounts for the reviewers' failure to notice the homoerotics of dirtiness'.¹²⁹ It is most certainly the case that the novel's representation of this relationship between Joan and Martha is erotically charged, and I do not wish to contradict Koven's argument that the novel is 'unashamed of its own explicitly homoerotic and subversive content'.¹³⁰ However I do want to argue that it was not necessarily the case that this eroticism passed 'unnoticed', as Koven remarks, and suggest a reason for *why* the novel was able to explore such explicitly 'subversive' behaviour. While *A Princess of the Gutter* does not maintain the emotional or physical distance that Koven suggests is so often used to structure homoerotic relationships

125 Koven, p. 220.

126 Wise, pp. 224-225.

127 Koven, p. 219.

128 Ibid., p. 218.

129 Ibid., p. 220.

130 Ibid.

between women, what is actively constructed as the narrative progresses is spiritual distance. More specifically, the religiosity that Joan embodies at the novel's end encompasses both moral and material distance. The symbolic reasons for which Joan is aligned with the angel in the church are clear enough; however, I would also suggest that Joan's sacrifice and subsequent apotheosis serve a romantic and erotic function in the novel. Joan's association with the angel, together with her own spiritual renaissance, generates a religious distance between the two women that permits their physical involvement, as it is rendered immaterial on account of their moral difference. Simply put, their erotic intimacy is mediated by their spiritual distance. On the occasion that Joan visits Martha in prison, before the kiss to which Koven refers, Martha again describes Joan as the angel in the church window: 'Oh Jo-an [...] I thought at first the angel in the church winder 'ad come alive, and 'ad walked into my cell; but it's yerself, and you're better than the angel' (295). Joan becomes herself an affective force of the the 'New Theology', and is thus 'better than the angel', for the angel is only a symbol of the beliefs and practices that Joan embodies. An important factor that enables Joan's spiritual conversion and her transition into figurative immateriality is her architectural legacy. In addition to planning a purpose-built hall for the girls' club, which is not executed within the space of the narrative, Joan's work in the East End includes her campaign to have her own property at Saffron Court destroyed. Aware that the leaseholder would refuse her the right to her own land so long as the value prevented her from buying out their lease, Joan appeals to the newly formed London County Council to have the houses condemned and pulled down. In their place, Joan commissions a block of model dwellings:

I had very strong views on the subject of these houses. I insisted on having large windows which would let in plenty of light. I could not forget what Mrs. Keys had said about her model rooms on Saffron Hill. The rooms should have light, and should be papered with very light, cheerful paper, and should have excellent supplies of water laid on. My architect friend, Mr. Foster, informed me, with a somewhat indulgent smile, that I should certainly spoil my tenants. [...] In my block of buildings there were ten new houses. Some were made with a view to accommodate families – being divided into little flats of from two to three rooms or even four rooms each.

The rooms had their kitchen, tiny scullery, bedrooms, and one bright little sitting-room: the sanitary arrangements were perfect; and ventilation was made not only thorough, but also of such a nature that, in spite of themselves, the tenants of the room would have a certain current of fresh air always coming in to ventilate their dwellings. (213-4)

The description of the spatial and sanitary requirements for the new lodgings are in keeping with the requirements for new houses set by the London County Council in 1889. (As is the patronising tone towards the inhabitants, who shall be ventilated 'in spite of themselves'.) Joan makes clear that she has gained the knowledge of experience from people such as her housekeeper, Mrs. Keys, but also that her experiences in renovating her own flat and the shoe factory have allowed her insight into the particular local requirements of building in London's East End. Most important for the present argument, however, is that this block of model dwellings becomes Joan's material legacy in the district in which she has worked. This is perhaps made most clear in Joan's admission that the inhabitants of the building insist on referring to her project as the 'Joan Mansions'. Contributing this material legacy to those people among whom she has worked permits Joan's personal distance from Martha and the other inhabitants of the East End; it also, as I have argued, neutralises the eroticism of the relationship between Martha and Joan.

It is not the case that Joan's physical distancing requires her to move away from the East End. As Koven points out, the novel concludes with a 'small community of loving women' in which Joan lives in the 'Joan Mansions'.¹³¹ Joan's apotheosis into a saintly figure sets her apart from those among whom she lives, but it does not rely on her extraction from the East End altogether. In fact, it is her apotheosis that allows her to carry out her existence as part of an unconventional household in a building where the reader is told only 'some were made to accommodate families' (214). Like *Robert Elsmere*, this novel pivots on an experimentation with new forms and new practices – and the processes by which these might both be introduced to conventional society. Like Ward, Meade is careful to posit these new forms – whether they involve a new manifestation of religion or a new

131 Koven, p. 219.

definition of social relationships – as part of a controlled cycle of political engagement. These are novels that seek to curtail potentially revolutionary ideas by forestalling the very problems which might lead to major reform. Yet these are also novels that engage meaningfully with questions of religious belief and social commitment, and in so doing suggest alternative models for the family and the household.

EPILOGUE

**HOUSING FOR A NEW ERA: THE HAMPSTEAD GARDEN
SUBURB AND MARY GABRIELLE COLLINS'S *GARDEN
SUBURB VERSES* (1913)**

One year before the outbreak of WWI, Mary Gabrielle Collins penned a poetic tribute to her place of residence: the Hampstead Garden Suburb. Situated at London's northwestern limit, Hampstead Garden Suburb had been conceived by Henrietta Barnett, who had founded the Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust Ltd. in 1906 after negotiating the purchase of 243 acres of land from Eton College.¹ While Barnett's work in the East End with her husband, the Reverend Samuel Barnett, made apparent to her that the neighbourhood would benefit greatly from town planning, she suggests that before the turn of the twentieth century the plan of how cities could be improved 'elicited only little interest, local or otherwise'.² Yet it is clear that Barnett's concept of town planning was shaped greatly by her participation in the settlement movement. In her essay 'Of Town Planning', originally published in *Cornhill Magazine*, she emphasises the importance of creating socially integrated neighbourhoods. Remembering her 'youthful indignation at the placid acceptance of stinking courts and alleys as the normal homes for the poor', Barnett claims that the philanthropic projects wrought in London's East End must be extended to the design of towns more broadly:

No one can view with satisfaction any town [...] where the poor, the strenuous, and the untutored live as far as possible removed from the rich, the leisured, the cultivated. The divorce is injurious to both. Too commonly it is supposed that the poor only suffer from this separation, but those who have the privilege of friendship among the working people know that the wealthy lose more by making their acquaintance than can be possibly computed.³

It was for this reason that Barnett insisted that Hampstead Garden Suburb 'house all classes in attractive surroundings' – or as she later corrects herself: 'it would be better to say [house] different standards of income'.⁴

The collection *Garden Suburb Verses* foregrounds this diversity, and also highlights the ways that different 'standards of income' played out when thinking about the differences between men's

1 Kathleen M. Slack, *Henrietta's Dream: a Chronicle of Hampstead Garden Suburb* (London: Calvert's North Star Press, 1982), pp. 10-11. See also Melvyn Miller and A. Stuart Gray, *Hampstead Garden Suburb* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1993), pp. 14-16.

2 Canon S.A. Barnett and Mrs. S.A. [Henrietta] Barnett, *Practicable Socialism* (London: Longmans, 1915), p. 262.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., p. 264; p. 265.

and women's housing. The masterplan of Hampstead Garden Suburb, designed by Raymond Unwin who had recently been involved in the design of Letchworth Garden City, was organised around a central square and included a Free Church and an Established Church (named St. Jude's on the Hill after Samuel Barnett's parish in East London), a Quaker Meeting House, two primary schools, a girls' grammar school (which remains the Henrietta Barnett School, a selective single-sex grammar school), and 'the institute', which held a variety of lectures, classes and concerts and which was to Barnett's mind the centre of the community. Other facilities included tennis courts, a bowling green, a croquet lawn, a gymnasium, a smoking room, a reading room with periodicals and newspapers and a Carnegie Library.⁵ Renowned arts and crafts architect Edward Lutyens, who designed many of the suburb's public buildings, was dismissed by Barnett in 1909 because she believed his designs to be extravagant and pretentious.⁶ The project of designing the suburb's housing was given to a number of architects including Courtenay M. Crickmer and J. Geoffrey Lucas, who had worked with Unwin at Letchworth, as well as MacKay Hugh (M.H.) Baillie Scott, C. Harrison Townsend, and Barry Parker (who worked in partnership with Unwin).⁷ Despite the engagement of at least seventeen architects, the overall design of the suburb remains coherent owing to the establishment of the Garden Suburb Development Company which aimed to improve standards of construction and also to coordinate the townscape.⁸ Housing provision at Hampstead Garden Suburb included a 70 acre 'Artisans' Quarter' where the first sod was turned when the project began construction, as well as a variety of detached homes ranging from modest cottages to rambling villas. In 'Of Town Planning', Barnett specifies that the rent for such homes ranges from 'tenements of 3s. 6d. a week to houses standing in their own gardens of rentals of £250 a year, united by cottages, villas, and

5 Slack, pp. 56-74.

6 Miller, pp. 80-81.

7 For a complete list of architects involved in the design of the suburb, see Raymond Unwin and M.H. Baillie Scott, *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), p. 34.

8 David Andrew Davidson, 'One Hundred Years in the Making: the Creation and Protection of Raymond Unwin's Legacy at Hampstead Garden Suburb', *Planning Perspectives*, 30.1 (2014), 141-152 (pp. 145-146). Davidson also notes that the formation of this body granted Unwin disproportionate influence that allowed him to personally regulate the design of all buildings in the suburb, whether built for private clients or the market.

houses priced at every other figure within that gamut'.⁹ The inhabitants of the suburb were also able to purchase property assisted by what Barnett refers to as the 'welcoming system and elastic doors of the co-partners'.¹⁰

In addition to including housing for all standards of income, Barnett also saw it necessary to include designs for groups of individuals whom she believed to need differentiated domestic arrangements or services. For instance, The Orchard (known originally as 'Haven of Rest'), which was completed in 1909, provided housing at rates of either 3s. 6d. or 4s. 6d. per week to beneficiaries of the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act.¹¹ Designed by Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin, with embellishments from Charles Paget Wade, the purpose-built accommodation at The Orchard included 57 one-room flats and was organised around a quadrangle intended to provide space for recreation and social interaction. The quadrangle arrangement for residential buildings suited both Unwin's and Barnett's planning principles. As Davidson has explored, Unwin unconventionally took the landscape as positive space and 'carefully layer[ed] his new work onto this'.¹² Cottages were treated as features in allotment sites, and gardens and roads were designed to open up green spaces and squares.¹³ For Barnett too, the preservation of open and accessible green space was central to town planning and, although it had been realised by the Americans, the Germans, and the Canadians, in England it had not yet reached the same 'gorgeous, riotous generosity'; instead, she explains 'English people seem to have adopted the idea that it is essential to surround their parks and gardens with visible barriers'.¹⁴ The quadrangle plan at The Orchard dispensed with visible barriers by using open arched entranceways that punctured the north and south elevations and allowed for vistas through the quadrangle.¹⁵

9 Barnett, p. 267.

10 Ibid.

11 Miller, p. 58.

12 Davidson, p. 142.

13 Ibid.

14 Barnett, p. 267; p. 270.

15 Slack, pp. 90-93. The Orchard was demolished and rebuilt between 1970 and 1972 after it had been left to deteriorate.

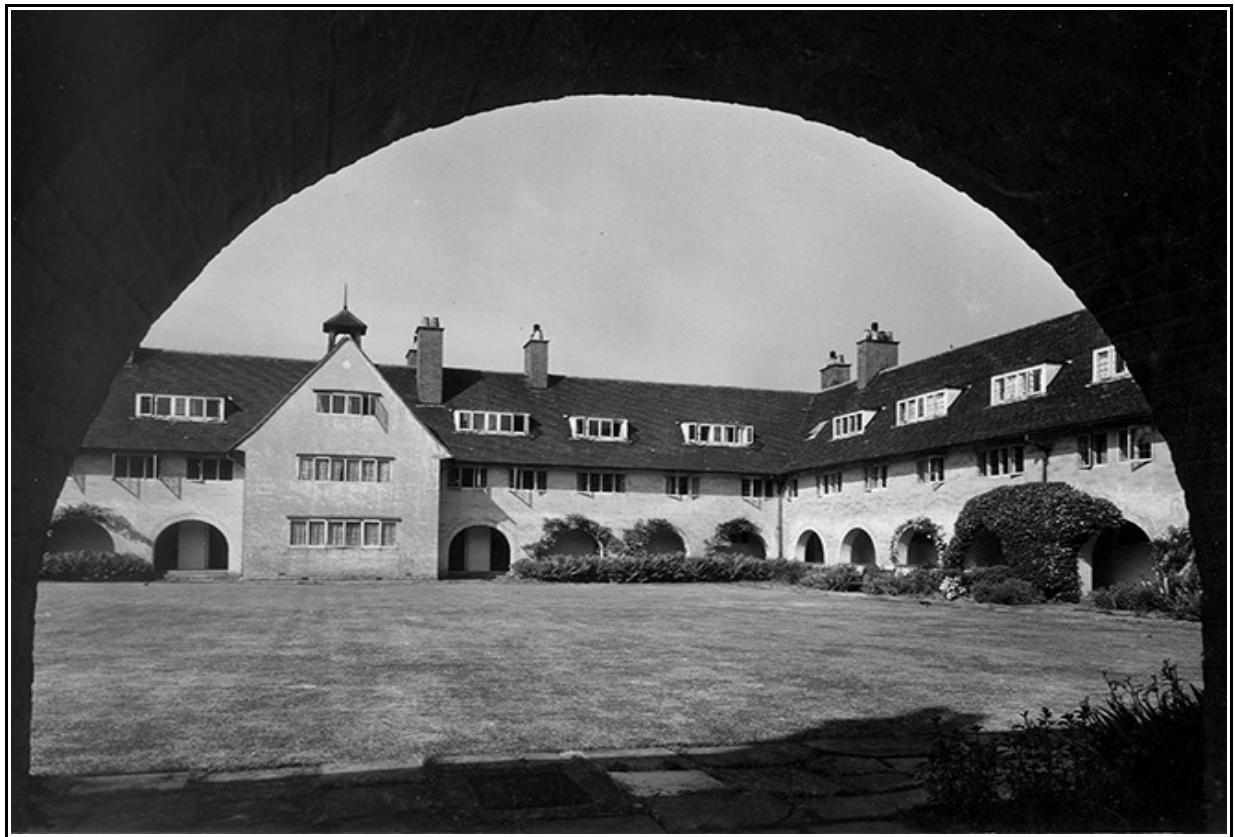


Figure 13: M.H. Baillie Scott, Waterlow Court, Hampstead Garden Suburb (built 1909; image 1951).

Source: RIBApix, RIBA Collections 4733, photograph by John Maltby.

Another building designed along this principle, and for an innovative social purpose, is Waterlow Court (Figure 13). Designed by Arts and Crafts architect M.H. Baillie Scott for the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company (known also as the Waterlow Company after founder Sir Sidney Waterlow) and constructed between 1909 and 1911, Waterlow Court provided purpose-built accommodation for single professional women. As Emily Gee notes, the 'sophisticated' design of the quadrangle with its arcaded cloister is one of many of the building's features that demonstrates attention to detail throughout.¹⁶ The lynch gate, timbered walkway, and use of half-timbering on the building's front elevation provides visual and material continuity with the nearby Heath Close, while the white lime-washed brick on the courtyard's interior contributes to the sense of

¹⁶ Emily Gee, "'Where Shall She Live?': Housing the New Working Woman in Late Victorian and Edwardian London', in *Living, Leisure and Law: Eight Building Types in England 1880-1941*, ed. by Geoff Brandwood (Reading: Spire, 2010), pp. 89-109 (p. 103).

spaciousness. The arcaded cloister opens into stairwells that, like the college quadrangle system, provide access to individual flats. Interior space was generous: each flat offered between three and five rooms, including a kitchen, however meals could also be taken in the communal dining room as residents would not have engaged individual servants. Waterlow Court combines private and flexible accommodation with a more general design of open public spaces and sweeping landscapes. Unlike earlier designs for purpose-built women's housing such as the Chenies Street Chambers, the residents at Waterlow Court were not circumscribed as closely by managerial expectations or social conventions. The building's more secluded location at Heath Close granted to the residents a less conspicuous position than in the city centre, and its communal gardens and dining hall allowed for – but did not enforce – companionability.¹⁷

The collection *Garden Suburb Verses*, written by a resident of the Suburb, pays homage to the visions of Henrietta Barnett and Raymond Unwin in its integration of the social pleasures of metropolitan life with its celebration of the natural landscape. Just as the fiction of the nineteenth century provided testimony of and gave substance to the ways that London's housing was inadequate in quantity and quality, in this collection the poetic descriptions of the Garden Suburb's healthful civic arrangement become a tonic for inhabitant and reader. According to the *Athenaeum*, the small book included 'verses on gardening and things of local interest to the Hampstead Garden Suburb'.¹⁸ While the book does focus on the suburb's landscape, with poems in celebration of, for instance, 'Our Hedges', 'The Old Trees' and the 'Flowers of Almond', the natural world is not its subject but rather a method through which to address what Collins describes as 'the vision' that is designed to give remedy to the 'waste of London streets'.¹⁹ The collection *Garden Suburb Verses*, therefore, is just as much about urbanism as it is suburbanism. The poem 'The Vision', which is

17 Housing was also provided for single men at Meadway Court, designed by G.L. Sutcliffe, where each flat included a room for a valet. Two additional buildings for single women were later added: Queen's Court (1927) and Emmott Close (1928). Financed by the United Women's Homes Association, these provided accommodation for clerks, typists, and nurses: a lower class than at Waterlow Court. See Micky Watkins, *Henrietta Barnett: Social Worker and Community Planner* (London: Hampstead Garden Suburb Archive Trust, 2011), p. 159.

18 'Books Published this Week', *The Athenaeum*, 10 January, 1914, p. 449.

19 Mary Gabrielle Collins, 'The Vision', *Garden Suburb Verses* (London: Co-Partnership Publishers, c. 1913), p. 3.

appropriately the first in the collection, is given further definition by another poem that details the provocation for this vision, 'As Through the Sunny Ways I Went', which is worth quoting in its entirety:

A horror haunted me to-day
As through the sunny Ways I went,
By gardens brimming o'er with flowers,
And hedges rich with bloom and scent.
A horror born of dingy streets,
Too pale for drab, too wan for grey,
Whose weary air can hardly bear
The reek of sordid meals away.

A horror haunted me to-day
As though the sunny Ways I went,
And saw the happy children there
Like treasured gifts from Heaven sent.
A horror born of torture dens
In which, by thousands, babes are thrust,
While Heaven is mute, and man a brute,
And Mother Earth but mud or dust.²⁰

The poem is the most explicit of the collection in establishing the contrast between London's 'dingy streets' and 'weary air', and Hampstead's 'sunny Ways' and 'gardens brimming o'er with flowers'. As such, it is also the darkest poem of the collection for it suggests that the prophetic 'vision' that brings salvation to the insalubrious urban landscape – figured in the poem 'The Vision' as a 'weary dove' – is matched by an equally present and haunting vision of 'horror'. The dichotomy the poem constructs between the noxious and fetid urban environment, where nature only exists as 'mud or dust', and the salutary benefits of the natural world is a conventional one, which has its roots in much nineteenth-century poetry concerning urban industrialisation; for instance, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's 'The Cry of the Children' addresses the plight of 'weeping' children who 'drive the wheels of iron / in the factories, round and round', who should instead be 'blowing toward the west' like 'young flowers'.²¹ In Collins's poem, the children are not associated with industry but are in

²⁰ Collins, p. 21.

²¹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 'The Cry of the Children', in *The Broadview Anthology of Victorian Poetry and Poetic*

born into 'torture dens' where 'man [is] a brute'. The areas of London that Collins refers to here, with the 'reek of sordid meals', draws on representations of the city's slums from earlier in the century.

Garden Suburb Verses offers a corrective to urban desolation and isolation in the form of the suburb itself, conveyed principally by two related themes: kinship and the pastoral. Unlike Barrett Browning's orphaned children who have been disowned by their 'brothers' in their 'happy fatherland', at the Garden Suburb residents 'come to know the flowers, / Not as callers once a year, / But as sisters and as brothers'.²² The language of kinship is used throughout the collection to refer not to ancestral families, but to convey the sense of fellowship present at the suburb that is apparently as natural as its hedges and flowers. It seems too that Collins is well aware of Barnett's ambition to design a 'spiritual and social community' for individuals at all income standards, for the relationship between the classes is rendered in the language of Christian egalitarianism in the poem 'With Angels in Between':

And see, the church itself is built
Of bricks and mortar mean;
And when, before the Father's feet,
Our rich and poor as brothers meet,
With angels in between,

Methinks we see the type once more
By heavenly wisdom fixed,
And, in our homes, should not disdain
To find ourselves arranged again
With classes rather mixed.²³

The poems in *Garden Suburb Verses* are, therefore, not simply pastoral elegies for a lost arcadia. And crucially, these poems do not wish away the urban and industrial developments of the nineteenth century. The suburb is celebrated not only for its natural landscape but also for its

Theory, ed. by Thomas J. Collins and Vivienne J. Rundle (Peterborough: Broadview, 2000), pp. 22-24 (p. 23; p. 22).

²² Collins, p. 12.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

progressiveness: its arrangement of 'classes rather mixed', and for having '*made* a garden of a town'.²⁴

While the salutary advantages of Hampstead Garden Suburb were celebrated in verse several years after its construction, its nativity had been given shape with the assistance of literature several years beforehand. Published in 1909 with contributions from Raymond Unwin and M.H. Baillie Scott, *Town Planning and Modern Architecture at the Hampstead Garden Suburb* introduces each of its eleven chapters and its postscript with literary epigraphs. The literary heritage of Hampstead is given colour by the work of Robert Bridges, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Leigh Hunt who describes it as a 'village, revelling in varieties'; Henrik Ibsen's *Master Builder* (1892) contextualises the project by decreeing that what is needed are 'houses for people to live in' while George Gissing's *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903) describes the necessary 'grace and order of domestic circumstance'; and other quotations by Matthew Arnold, Jonathan Swift, Samuel Pepys, Charles Dickens, Alexander Pope, and William Wordsworth – to name but a few – appear as endorsements in such a way that seems to suggest their creative efforts were intended to herald the suburb's development.²⁵ As one might expect given his residence in Hampstead, the sylvan spirit of John Keats flutters through the entire volume like a 'winnowing wind', but is balanced by the pragmatic utopianism found in the essays and fiction of H.G. Wells.²⁶ The reader is reminded that there is 'no more intellectually active part of London than Hampstead', whose 'story' also remembers the names of 'Constable, Mrs. Barbauld, Blake and Shelley'.²⁷

Town Planning and Modern Architecture offers to its readers as much of the neighbourhood's literary heritage as it does discussion of the suburb's planning and its domestic architecture. Just as novels of the nineteenth century became bodies of work that publicised the city's housing crisis, and galvanised effort for reform and redevelopment, in this case the emergent professions of

24 Collins, 'The Old Trees', p. 8. Italics added.

25 Unwin and Baillie Scott, p. 11; p. 29; p. 43.

26 John Keats, 'Ode to Autumn', in *Poems by John Keats* (London and New York: George Bell & Sons, 1897), pp. 242-243 (p. 242).

27 Unwin and Baillie Scott, p. 80; p. 73.

architecture and town planning – and their projects – are given substance by the inclusion of many of these same novels together with poetry, drama, and essays. Both Unwin and Baillie Scott were aware that their visions for the suburb should not only be represented in a collection that includes literature, but that their project should be *shaped* by literature. As the collection of essays on the suburb is certainly an effort in sales promotion, the amplifications of Hampstead's literary and intellectual heritage is in part a savvy manoeuvre designed to appeal to the egos of potentially interested buyers. Despite this, what cannot be reduced to conceit is the degree to which literature and architecture are intimately connected in this text. *Town Planning and Modern Architecture* underscores the significance of literature in both conceiving of and planning the new garden suburb. If the late nineteenth-century housing crisis had been written into cultural significance by way of sensationalist new journalism and slum fiction, this is a text that sought to redress the errors of earlier literary representation and offer Hampstead's healthful green spaces and thoughtful domestic forms as a palliative for the insalubrious spaces of the inner city slums. I do not mean to suggest that after the turn of the century the city's housing crisis was in any way historically or materially solved; rather, that such texts sought to repair the gap – or fissure – that caused the crisis of representation that I discuss in the Introduction of this thesis. It was not only the new domestic structures and the formally innovative town planning of Hampstead Garden Suburb that attempted to alleviate this crisis, but these texts also sought to address this fissure by way of an engagement with the very medium in which the crisis had been wrought: literature. After the suburb's basic plan achieved completion in 1909, *The Times* declared that 'the Garden Suburb at Hampstead is proof of what can be done when order and design take the place of anarchy and chaos'.²⁸ The proclamation appears as the epigraph to *Town Planning and Modern Architecture*.

28 Unwin and Baillie Scott, epigraph.

Conclusion

Garden Suburb Verses and *Town Planning and Modern Architecture* are but two responses to the late nineteenth-century housing crisis. These texts engage with the material reality of this crisis, and also its representation in literature. Both texts also respond to what I characterise in the Introduction of this thesis as London's housing fissure: these are texts that represent change in the design and use of domestic architecture, but also engage with the ways these material changes effect narrative form. That is, these representations of new housing do not sit comfortably within the nineteenth-century novel form – but the instances where its unfitness leaves gaps or fissures generate opportunities for productive invention and modification. From the turn of the century, literary representation expressed concerns about changes to the city's domestic architecture; but it was also literature that served as a tonic for such concerns. Just as the image of Hampstead Garden Suburb was founded upon a literary heritage that served to distinguish the suburban from the urban, written work also helped to generate changes to the city's built environment. For instance, the well-known Garden City planning manual *Garden Cities of To-Morrow* (1902) includes quotations from William Blake, Goethe, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sir Walter Scott to elucidate its project of urban reform. First published in 1898 as *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, the entire scheme is, according to Howard, a response to Edward Bellamy's utopian novel *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (1888) which was, as John R. Mullin and Kenneth Payne acknowledge, 'one of the most influential books in the evolution of city planning as a profession and field of scholarly inquiry'.²⁹ The literary conception of the ideal town was 'given shape for its realisation within five years of the idea first being made public' in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, with the beginning of construction at Letchworth Garden City in 1903.³⁰

Looking Backward was not the first novel to directly influence architecture and town

29 John R. Mullin and Kenneth Payne, 'Thoughts on Edward Bellamy as City Planner: The Ordered Art of Geometry', *Landscape Architecture & Regional Planning Faculty Publication*, Series 3, Paper 34 (1997), n.p.

30 C.B. Purdom, *Letchworth Achievement* (London: J.M. Dent, 1963), p. 4.

planning. In Chapter 2 of this thesis I suggested that the groundwork for the Passmore Edwards Settlement was laid in the pages of Mary Ward's *Marcella* (1894). Yet my intention for this thesis has not been to argue that the relationship between architecture and literature is only traceable when a building, first explored in literature, is physically realised. After all, every building is a representation of some kind – visual or otherwise – before it is built. Instead, this thesis has engaged with the ways that the literary representation of architecture, and domestic architecture in particular, is a site that gives evidence to the formation of new identities, and the contestation of different subjectivities, during a period in which the way people lived together in the city was being radically reconceptualised. It has sought to demonstrate thereby the ways that women's writing offers an interpretation of and response to changes in urban domestic architecture during a period when the city's labour market was changing rapidly. It has suggested that despite women's marginalisation from the emergent professions of architecture and city planning, literature offers significant evidence of the ways that women engaged with – and in so doing helped to shape – the city's built environment. This thesis responds in part to Rita Felski's imperative question: how do our definitions of historical or cultural categories change when we refuse to accept men's experience as paradigmatic?³¹ It is for this reason that women's fiction has played a central role in my analysis of the changing nature of domestic architecture during the late nineteenth century. This thesis has resisted a model of comparison that would attempt to elevate certain neglected women authors to canonical status, or simply differentiate women's experience of domestic architecture from men's. Instead, I have sought to, first, identify ways in which women were engaged in the legislative development, design, construction, and inhabitation of new forms of domestic architecture at the turn of the twentieth century; and, second, to indicate how the new forms of housing that emerged in this period recast and complicate definitions of home and identity.

I would like to revisit the claim, set out in the Introduction, that the novels examined in this thesis present alternative discourses to those that privilege housing as a commodity. While the

31 Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 10.

housing schemes initiated by model dwellings companies were predicated upon a system of shareholder investment and return, the novels examined in Chapter 2 each express concern – albeit in different ways – about how this form of housing may only serve to further entrench class divisions. Women's chambers, made necessary by women's entry into London's labour market, were financed by a similar scheme of shareholder investment. Yet the novels considered in Chapter 3 explore the ways that housing, even that which was built for the purpose of housing independent women, would be inadequate so long as a woman's domestic arrangements determined her social status. Women's housing offered an instrumental solution to women's presence in urban centres, rather than a transformative solution to the more systemic difficulties unearthed by changing social and economic roles. While settlement housing was most often financed by the donations of benefactors and aimed to facilitate communication between classes, the novels explored in Chapter 4 foreground the ways in which new models of housing also galvanised the dynamics of other social relationships (such as those between women) and in so doing made visible unconventional gender behaviour and dissident sexual identities. What unites all of these novels, however, is their emphasis on the ways that urban environments demand diverse housing. While much of the literature examined in this thesis is critical of certain aspects of new housing design, what is a certainty of each author is that all are necessary departures from the design of the conventional family home. These novels identify the need for experimentation in the design of urban domestic architecture: each suggests that the city's novel housing exposes the necessity of continuing improvement in spatial design and social organisation.

In an article written for the *London Review of Books* in 2014, 'Where Will We Live?', James Meek suggests that London's – and Britain's – housing crisis is in large part the consequence of a shortfall in construction:

There aren't enough homes in Tower Hamlets. There aren't enough homes in London, in the South-East, in Britain. The shortage gets worse. Each year, population growth and the shrinking of average household size adds a

quarter of a million households to the 26 million we have now. The number of new homes being built is barely above a hundred thousand.³²

Meek is right, of course: a shortage of resources will necessarily drive up the value of that resource; and when that resource is as basic as housing, social inequity quickly amplifies owing to inequality of access. A similar observation was made fourteen years earlier by filmmaker Patrick Keiller in his documentary *The Dilapidated Dwelling* (2004). While Keiller comments on the government's diminishing contribution to the country's housing stock over the last forty years, he is most interested in the ways that private development might encourage residential expansion into brownfield areas around London. Yet both Meek and Keiller neglect to shift their attention from the *number* of homes that are currently being constructed to the *kind* of homes that might best help to alleviate the shortage. The title of Meek's essay is taken from the title of a book by the early twentieth-century reformer Mary Higgs, *Where Shall She Live?* (1910), which exposes women's poverty of access to housing and aims to provide information for women seeking accommodation in urban centres. Written for the National Association for Women's Lodging Homes, the book offers 'startling revelations of national need' but is equally preoccupied with thinking through solutions to the housing problem that also address social concerns.³³ Higgs explains of the housing crisis:

Here is a real touch. It is not a work that can be done all at once. It needs patient investigation of local need, patient adoption of means to ends, patient experiment. In the solution to this problem we shall come into real touch with many others, the problem of the sweated worker, the unemployed, the ill-used wife – in fact, all women's problems in their acutest phase. We shall get no dilettante knowledge, but real insight into the heart of things.³⁴

In looking back to Higgs's work, perhaps Meek, and others who seek explanation and solution for the present-day housing crisis, might do well to read beyond its title. The nineteenth-century

32 James Meek, 'Where Will We Live?', *London Review of Books*, 36.1 (2014), pp. 7-16 (p. 7).

33 Mary Higgs and Edward E. Hayward, *Where Shall She Live?* (London: King & Son, 1910), p. iv.

34 Ibid., p. 186.

housing crisis, and the literary responses of those who engaged with it, offer important resources for the present: patient investigation, an attentiveness to the relationship between means and ends, and a dedication to rigorous experiment. Patient investigation and persistent innovation are but two important legacies of the nineteenth-century solution to London's housing crisis. Understanding the relationship between these two practices is vital now more than ever, if the city is to keep pace with ever-changing patterns of life and labour.

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